

GUERRILLAS,
PIRATES AND
ANARCHISTS:

A MANIFESTO FOR
ANTI-POLITICS



guerrilla

noun

1. A member of an irregular, usually indigenous, military or paramilitary force operating in small bands in occupied territory to harass and undermine the enemy, as by surprise raids.
2. War carried on by the repeated attacks of independent bands; a system of irregular warfare by means of raids and surprises.
3. Properly, a band of independent and generally predatory fighters in a war; now, more commonly, an individual member of such a band.

Such are three simple dictionary definitions of the word "guerrilla". Should we read further, we discover that "guerrilla" is a diminutive of the Spanish word "guerra" which means "war". A further dictionary defines "guerrilla" as "a member of an irregular, usually politically motivated, armed force that combats stronger regular forces, such as the army or police" and further dictionaries still flag up the term "urban guerrilla" [someone who fights in built up areas] and we learn that people like the maquis [French resistance fighters during World War 2] were "guerrillas" too. So we learn that guerrillas have the will to fight against a usually much more powerful force and that, as a result, they have to arrange, modulate and carry out their tactics accordingly. Guerrillas are usually small groups of people, armed with whatever they can find, acquire or make for themselves that, in terms of attack, use ambushes, sabotage, raids, petty warfare, hit-and-run tactics, and their mobility to harass, annoy, pick off, demoralise and, hopefully, ultimately defeat their enemy. A guerrilla is NOT a large ape that likes bananas. That's a gorilla.

From all this you may come to the conclusion that the life of a guerrilla is unorthodox, autarkic [self-sufficient], very much based on a strong bond of trust between the small groups of people that form guerrilla bands. If there's something guerrillas need to know or do then it will have to be the guerrillas who find out what they need to know and the guerrillas who complete the task. Guerrillas can't just phone up the guy who knows the thing or does the thing. They are at war, they have picked a side, they have enemies, and so that must always come into account. Their lives are at stake and they are fighting to preserve them in ways they find acceptable to themselves against forces that wish to control or even destroy them.

One of the main things this book is about is having, and developing, "guerrilla mind". This is not the mind of an actual guerrilla fighting in a war somewhere [although it is also that too - but not quite how you think] but the kind of mind which, in anybody, might be said to be the mind of a guerrilla, an outlaw, someone fighting against the overwhelming forces, and thinking, of mainstream, moralist, authoritarian-capitalist, orthodox normality. "Guerrilla mind", as I am utilising the term in this book, is that mind which ambushes, sabotages and raids the ruling thinking of this society in order to defeat it and win a war for how we think. Or, to put it in other terms, it is that mind which is even interested that more and more people might begin to think for themselves in a world that constantly gaslights them, sets an agenda for them to follow and is more than ready to provide the next thought in their head for them to react to, be outraged about and generally be occupied by [so giving you no time to "think for yourself"]. "Guerrilla mind" is that mind which is not prepared to accept being intellectually dominated and informationally bombarded by weapons of war aimed to render the mass of people incapable of thinking for themselves because they have been turned into intellectual

and moral dependents who need to be spoon-fed what to think and what to do with their lives. "Guerrilla mind" is that mind which seeks, and always cherishes, independence of mind and so thought which inevitably leads to independence of action. "Guerrilla mind" is outlaw thinking beyond the moral boundaries that society wants to dictate to you and to me; it is the will to not let others set your intellectual or moral boundaries; it is the demand for intellectual and moral independence. And not just for you, but for whoever will join you as well - and potentially for everybody [for it is thought BETTER for everybody]. Thus, as you can see, "guerrilla mind" is, in this sense, very much "the mind of an actual guerrilla fighting in a war". But its primarily an intellectual and moral war and only derivatively [but necessarily] a material war [for what is one to do if people will back up their ideas and thinking with force but defend themselves?].

Much of my writing in the past has been about this war, made allusion to this war, or argued for tactics within it. The basic claim of the anarchy I have always spoken to from the beginning was that we need to be people who think differently, have different values and think for ourselves. This is a non-negotiable attribute of "the anarchist". Being intellectually and morally independent people has always been a jumping off point for any anarchism I have promoted or discussed in my own writing and conversations with others. This, for me, is both as basic and as necessary as it gets if we want to be people who decide our own lives for ourselves devoid of societal coercions. This is why I came to very much agree with the idea of "free spirits" which Nietzsche spoke about in his books and which the anarchist readers of Nietzsche, Emma Goldman and Renzo Novatore, repeated in their own differing constructions of anarchist character in their own writings too. As I am sure I have raised several times before, I find it hard to imagine how we could ever have "free societies" if we cannot even raise in ourselves the

desire to be such people as think for themselves and create their own ethical values and relationships. The latter is a necessary and sufficient condition of the former.

Necessarily, it is also the case that this must be a desire that comes *from* ourselves. Guerrillas are those who come to the conclusion that a malevolent power exists against whom they must fight in order to preserve an environment they want to live in. This is no less true in intellectual and moral spheres than it is in political and economic ones. I myself would argue that the former pair in fact influence and guide the latter pair. People everywhere act in accordance with their beliefs, values and thinking [or those of others with which they often come to alienating compromises] and so it matters a lot for material outcomes what these things actually are and are about. You don't imagine, do you, that 24 hour news channels owned by billionaires, or that newspaper empires owned by the same people, or that lots of other people besides even these pump out their effluvia into the minds of anyone dumb enough to engage them for nothing do you? Feed people the lie, or simply the values, that you want them to ingest until it becomes a habit, normality, part of the furniture, is a tactic that happens to work - not on everybody, of course, but on enough people to make a difference. Elections are won today on the basis of people being lied to and believing the lie in enough numbers. Even those who don't believe the lie will normally share intellectual and moral values with those who do. Its how you get "democracies" where parties are meant to be opposed but actually believe almost entirely the same things and pursue almost identical goals with virtually identical policies by appealing to the same gaslit electorate. You may not be on the right or the left of politics, you may not be a supporter of this party or that, but its almost a dead cert you've accepted capitalism [as they all have as well], for example. And that makes all the difference.

So, sometimes, guerrillas are those who carry out material attacks exactly because they do not accept the prevailing values and ideas of bourgeois society. I imagine this is why Max Boot has a chapter in his book *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* titled "Propaganda by the Deed" which covers anarchist action between the early 1880s and 1939 and begins with a concise retelling of the story of Émile Henry who threw a bomb in the Café Terminus on February 12th, 1894. Henry was certainly one thinking for himself in his actions and had found himself disgusted with bourgeois society when he did so, regarding it as a criminal affront to life itself when he did. Consequently, he saw the bourgeois as criminally guilty of the society, and its oppression, that was all around him and this, in his mind, made them all legitimate targets of attack. His own attack was on so-called "ordinary" people as a result but in the years 1894-1901 anarchists of similar mind actually managed to kill the President of France, the Prime Minister of Spain, the Empress of Austria-Hungary, the President of the United States of America and the King of Italy. All of the anarchist guerrillas who murdered these people were themselves caught and subsequently executed - except, that is, for Gaetano Bresci who had murdered Umberto, King of Italy. As Italy had no death penalty at the time, he was sentenced to penal servitude on a prison island. Nevertheless, he was found dead within a year. The official story was that he had hanged himself but many maintained he had been himself murdered.

So, yes, there was a time when several anarchists, properly so called, had considerably more stomach than people using that label casually in social media bios have today. Today, sad to say, many people do not even have the stomach for taking possession of their own minds or creating their own lives in defiance of social customs and normalities and this is a huge part of the contemporary human problem when people are content to

simply be led by the nose by capitalist and authoritarian dictates and the constant distractions to self-directed thought and action they will always be able to provide. In simple terms, we might even present the problem as simply as this: not nearly enough people are living *their own* lives. They are living lives others have conditioned and decided for them and it has never occurred to them even to question the realities put before them. Profoundly incurious people, they simply swallow down whatever they are spoon-fed and act as unthinking, uncritical partisans of it: the barbarian hordes. An act of insurrection against this, in itself, such as those carried out formerly by propagandists by the deed, or even an egoistic act of self-determination that might make you stand out from the bourgeois crowd as contrary and unusual, thus becomes something increasingly impossible to even imagine, let alone contemplate. These unthinking people need to become guerrillas in a war against the oppression of all of us [which they, by being unthinking, help propagate] but the idea, should it ever be presented to them, would only strike them as bizarre and deeply unpleasant in its foreseeable conditions and consequences.

Now if you have read the *US Army Guerrilla Warfare Handbook*, as I have, then you will know that "The military operations of resistance movements are customarily supported and accompanied by political and economic activities—both overt and clandestine—of individuals and groups integrated, or acting in conjunction with, guerrillas. The several types of activities are interlocking." This is an interesting triumvirate of activities which suggests the experience of some form of oppression as the basis for any guerrilla activity. Why be a guerrilla, why be at war, unless you have a reason to fight or something you think should be fought for? Fundamentally, it seems to me, these are struggles for certain forms of social relations. Later on in the same handbook, it is said

that "resistance is the cornerstone of guerrilla warfare" and this resistance is defined in the face of some oppression, domination or otherwise intolerable "social or economic" situation. Here it is notable that not only guerrillas [who are the active combatants in this scenario] are engaged in this fight but there are multiple ways to take part in it. Guerrillas will be the active fighters engaging in offensive operations [which, although offensive in nature, may be for entirely defensive purposes nevertheless] but there may also be more passive resisters, those who work in an underground way to support others and yet others in sympathy who simply "look the other way". In this book I'm concerned primarily with thinking of us as the guerrillas, however, and with developing guerrilla minds, with developing people who want to go on the offensive, change their thinking, affect and disrupt the thinking of others, and who want to act to defend an anarchistic view of life and be people of their own independence and intellectual and moral agency.

Consequently, this book is going to walk a line between challenging and even changing thinking [by suggesting new ways to think or new values to consider] and more practical subjects such as what to do to survive if you don't mind breaking the law. It comes from a place of commitment to actively living OTHER than how legalistic and moralistic Western democracies have gerrymandered people into thinking they should live because this is believed to be compatible with the idea "anarchy" to which I, and presumably you as a reader of this book, have some allegiance. This is to say that this book is going to discuss how to live as an outlaw [that is, as one outside the law] and as an immoralist [one who eschews the moral point of view - although not the idea of a personal ethics] in defiance of authoritarian-capitalist normality. This, as other books I have written, is a book for "free spirits" who insist on growing wild rather than in civilizationally-mandated serried rows. So, in this respect, forget everything you've been taught by parents, teachers,

bosses and cops [yes, even anarchists cops, for they do most certainly exist!]. Why? Because its all leading you astray and its all bullshit. It is the prison for your mind that you must break out of if you want independence and self-determination. Let me give you an extended example of those who did this before: pirates!

Within the last twelve months I became quite interested in various images which, in original form, would be commonly described as a "pirate flags" - perhaps things better known as "the jolly roger". This is a design, of several similar ones [often featuring some formation of skull and cross bones], which pirates flew from their masts in days of yore. This activity, and my fascination with its iconography, led to me thinking more about the association of pirates with anarchists, an association which, doing one's research diligently, has some body of scholarship behind it. [This includes interesting and authoritative work by private and public scholars who are noted anarchists themselves as in Peter Lamborn Wilson's well received book about the Barbary pirates - especially those of Rabat-Salé in Morocco - and the final book David Graeber was working on before his untimely death which covers the myths, legends and actuality of the pirates of his beloved Madagascar.] Besides these books, scholars who are not anarchists at all [although in former times some of them may well have been socialists or Marxists and the trope of a "Marxist history" is not an unknown one] have also written histories of piracy which want to link in the phenomenon of piracy to political narratives about the world of the day and so "make sense" of it as not only a historically contingent but also a convincingly political act.

I will be paying attention to such histories of pirates and piracy in what follows for it is certainly the case that pirates can be put, and seen, in political context. Some, in fact,

would suggest that this is an absolute necessity in order to make sense of them and it may even be the case, as Gabriel Kuhn asserts in his book to be discussed below, that there are "things radicals can learn" from historical pirates as a result. In fact, it turns out we need to consider such questions quite deeply so what follows will not simply be the recitation of a synthesised "cod history" of the pirates. There are any number of books by people paid to write such things for those who want them. In this text, however, I want to especially focus on that relation of pirates to anarchists and piracy to anarchy. This, of course, involves asking who the actual historical pirates were, how they lived and what they did. But it also involves [yet again!] asking what anarchy is and what an anarchist is. This, I imagine, is no bad thing though for I often come across people who seem to have forgotten - or perhaps never even knew to begin with. Perhaps this little book on so-called "an-argh-chy" will then remind them!

I begin with Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's book, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. This book, which won the International Labor History Award, is written by two American Marxist historians and deals with the "many-headed hydra" of forces from "dispossessed commoners, transported felons, indentured servants [and] religious radicals" to "pirates, urban laborers, soldiers, sailors, and African slaves" which those states that were beginning to build empires, designate territories and so create capitalism had to deal with in the process of so doing. The book, as one might expect of Marxist historians, wants to tell their story in the midst of this process and describe their history as connected, a matter of politics and economics and not merely contingent events. Since I am here interested in pirates specifically I shall focus especially on this in what they have to say but, as is the nature of their argument in this book, I cannot just excerpt pirates

from history and talk about them in the abstract. Linebaugh and Rediker, in fact, write in such a way as to make this impossible and they imbue piracy as a phenomenon with social and political meaning and consequence coming directly out of their time and place in history and the circumstances of those things which we shall be forced to consider as a result. Pirates existed when and as they existed for specific historical reasons.

Consequently, I start not at sea aboard some pirate ship but in what was then a village called Putney just outside London, England, during the later years of the English Civil War. It was here that the so-called Putney Debates took place as the New Model Army decided what they wanted to do about their victory over the English royalists. By far the most radical of those who took part in these debates was the New Model Army officer, and *de facto* leader of the faction known as "The Levellers", Thomas Rainsborough. He advocated:

"law in the English language (proceedings had up to then been in Latin), the right to call witnesses, the right to a speedy trial, equality under the law, no impressment [the practice of forcing people into military or naval service, often without notice], religious toleration, jury trials, no double jeopardy, the right to confront accusers, and the abolition of capital punishment for theft. He emphasized the sovereignty and rights of 'the poorest he that is in England,' and was aware of the 'many scufflings between the honest men of England and those who have tyrannized over them.' One of these scufflings concerned the denial of access to the commons, which to Rainsborough was the 'greatest tyranny that was thought of in the world.' The gentry 'turned the poor men out of doors'—that is, evicted them. Defending the popular right to the commons and the subsistence they afforded,

Rainsborough claimed that 'God hath set down that thing as to propriety with this law of his, Thou shalt not steal.'"

The disputes of the English Civil War are often popularly and vulgarly painted as disputes between those who stood for the royal right of power and those who stood for parliamentary rights of power, with the latter being imagined more "democratic" than the former. But the Putney Debates revealed the so-called "grandees" of the parliamentarian side to be rather more interested in feathering their own nests than sharing out the power between everyone. Thus, people like the Leveller Rainsborough or even the Digger, Gerrard Winstanley [whom I discuss at length elsewhere], stood out as radicals pushing agendas that went far too far for those at the top of the New Model Army. Although these were very much against royalist pretensions, they didn't want every man to have the vote instead. What, as one Colonel expressed it, if these people then voted for "an equality of lands and estates"? Heaven forbid!

This was historically the time when "the commons" - once a term which meant unused land in general - provided the necessary territory for subsistence farming and so subsistence living. But times were changing and landowners, or those with riches and pretensions to be even bigger landowners, were coming round to the practice of farming for profit and what would become something done on an industrial basis. For this they needed LAND and that land wasn't going to be forthcoming if it was regarded as commons. This, as readers of seventeenth century history will come to realise, was exactly what animated Gerrard Winstanley with his belief that the earth was "a common treasury", a phrase often repeated in his writings. But at this time the power of property and privilege was coming into conflict with that of the mass of people and the commons

because there was the basis and reality of capitalism to be created through state power, private ownership of property and the coercion of people to work. What Linebaugh and Rediker say about this is that, in the Putney Debates, what was at issue was "a future with the commons and without slavery, or... one with slavery and without the commons."

General readers might not realise that the Levellers of the English Civil War period were anti-slavery but this was very much an active issue for the slaves were not merely captured Africans [North Africans or "Turks" would capture Europeans as their own slaves too] but many kinds of English people themselves through practices of "impressment" or press-ganging, not to mention the "spiriting" or kidnapping [which, originally, was literally as it sounds - stealing children] which might see people forcibly taken and sent across the Atlantic to colonies where they would be set to work, assuming they survived the journey, in back-breaking tasks which would kill a fair percentage more of them soon enough as well. Slaves were literally used as "human resources" [a phrase we know in another guise today] and the slave masters were not afraid to work the slaves to death as more could always be procured one way or another. Slavery at this point was not uniquely about race but it was about who could be captured and pressed into service. The Levellers spoke out against all of it in the face of a nascent capitalism and empire which needed manpower to do its work for it [as it always has and always will until robot, i.e. slave, armies which can do all the human work have been constructed, at least].

To this context of Putney, Linebaugh and Rediker add the Naples rebellion of 1647 and the Diggers who began their activities in 1649. The issues here were similar: the commons, or increasing lack of them, slavery, class or privilege, the possibility of

common liberty. This, of course, was also the time of Thomas Hobbes, soon to deliver his *Leviathan* to the world, and, later, of John Locke, who would discourse on the right of some people to take away what other people had because they could improve it and make use of it in ways others could not [something such people imagined GAVE THEM THE RIGHT to take away from others]. The seventeenth century was that century in which the state came into its own as we know it now and in which capitalism began to find its feet as an exploitation of private property for private wealth production which required to manipulate and exploit the mass of people in order to produce it. Naturally, then, who had the power to do what, the supremacy of the state, the rights of human beings [or the lack of them], how society basically functioned, what belonged to who and why, were basic and important matters of the time.

A signature event of this time period, then, might be the new English republic's action to end the activities of the Diggers on George's Hill in which the state propagated a military intervention on behalf of private property. Its interesting that, retrospectively, Linebaugh and Rediker see this as a matter of "the commons or slavery" but, of course, they are right to do so. If one has "commons" then one can subsist based on one's own labour without need for wealth. One life, as a matter of something that exists at a subsistence level, requires only the resources you have to hand and can maintain for yourself. People did this worldwide for centuries, millennia, in fact. But enclosure, private acquisition of land and wealth and the desire to produce more, made this increasingly impossible. Put very simply, if you don't have land to survive upon, if your access to basic resources is blocked by force, then your survival is put into the hands of others and you are made reliant upon them. This was exactly the issue as the Diggers saw it. Gerrard Winstanley then "opposed slavery, dispossession, the destruction of the

commons, poverty, wage labour, private property, and the death penalty." His plan was an urging of the "common people" to take their lives into their own hands before it was too late on common land. The state saw his ploy for what it was, however, and stamped it out definitively before it could go too far. As Winstanley saw it, the problem was simple: "The teeth of all nations hath been set on edge by this sour grape, the covetous murdering sword." As a consequence, he advocated for a worldwide proto-communism which even Lenin would later recognise as such.

This might seem like a strange background to an example that's meant to be about pirates - but perhaps, historically, pirates weren't exactly the people you see portrayed in movies produced by Disney [a company who, whilst trying to profit vastly from films about pirates, are horrified by the actions of modern digital pirates to harvest and profit from their content]. In reality, however, this political introduction, when fleshed out further, makes some sense. To do this, we need to set sail and go to sea. But to do that you need a navy. By the seventeenth century Europeans had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and found India. Others, heading west across the Atlantic, had found the Caribbean islands, North, Central and South America. One or two had even circumnavigated the globe. Europeans were thus well aware that other places existed and that these places had things they did not have. What's more, these places could be imagined as either markets to trade with or places to conquer. But to do that you need a navy and you need people to go there and get what you want.

Consequently, Linebaugh and Rediker describe a two-fold development: "the organization of the maritime state from above, and the self-organization of sailors from below." This also relates to the term "hydrarchy", a term which highlights the importance

of controlling the seas at this point in history for European empires [and others] who used the sea for trade and to increase their own colonial influence upon the world [something else which would help them to establish economically profitable footholds at various points of the globe]. The ship, as these historians then point out, "became both an engine of capitalism in the wake of the bourgeois revolution in England and a setting of resistance, a place to which and in which the ideas and practices of revolutionaries defeated and repressed" could continue to exist and circulate. In other words, it is the argument of Linebaugh and Rediker that exactly the concerns our people's revolutionaries had had on land, would also find their way to sea and rise up in the form of pirates and piracy. Not just guys with eyepatches, wooden legs and a parrot that would say "pieces of eight" on demand, pirates were about a lot more than simple greed. Because of this, they would come to pose the age's deadliest threat to the nascent capitalism of European empires - which, of course, would be their undoing in the end.

Thus, the situation at the time is that "The seizure of land and labor in England, Ireland, Africa, and the Americas laid the military, commercial, and financial foundations for capitalism and imperialism, which could be organized and maintained only through... the maritime state." England in the time of Cromwell, however, did not have many ships and there were other colonial powers [particularly the Dutch, the Spanish and the French] who were out there competing for new territories and their resources. A war was on for control of the Atlantic. Cromwell thus had to swiftly act to vastly increase his navy both in terms of ships and sailors [requiring both a merchant navy and a Royal Navy]. Shipping, it is very important to understand, was seen as the key way to increase economic power

by such powers at this point in time. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, English trade would consequently rise by several percent a year, every year.

Who, however, was going to volunteer to serve aboard the ships that carried out all this activity back and forth across the Atlantic? The answer to that is that a lot of the people did not "volunteer" at all. They were simply "impressed" - which means forcibly taken - and made to be sailors on pain of death. The life of a sailor at this time was no picnic. Food on board ship was scarce and might sometimes run out. [There were no shops or telecommunications in the seventeenth century. One simply had to take what one needed when they left port. If it ran out, it ran out.] Pay was hard to come by and it wasn't unknown that sailors might wait ten years to be paid. There was also disease which was often rife [and not just scurvy for lack of vitamin C!]. Yet, by the same token, the penalty for desertion was death and the sailors, hardly the happiest bunch to begin with, were treated to violent discipline within a very hierarchical social structure to keep them at their task in service of king [or queen] and country. Then there is the fact that one navy might meet that of another whilst at sea and cannon fire might be exchanged, sinking your ship at sea. Add to that that these ships might often be transporting slaves to some recently discovered land to work there on various plantations. As we can see, from the beginning capitalism was the coercion and exploitation of human beings for the generation of privately accumulated profit. That power parliaments and sovereigns claimed to have was won at the price of human lives. The architects of this system did not think of the people they were using up morally, they were simply imagined as resources at the state's disposal. By the end of the seventeenth century England's Royal Navy was "England's greatest employer of labor, its greatest consumer of material, and its greatest industrial enterprise." It was used to defend merchant shipping and colonies

and to attack such opponents as dared to show their faces. Essentially, it was a force deployed to create watery enclosures much as enclosure had been taking place on land.

Consequently:

"By the last half of the seventeenth century, capitalists had organized the exploitation of human labor in four basic ways. The first of these was the big commercial estate for the practice of capitalist agriculture, whose American equivalent was the plantation, in many senses the most important mercantilist achievement. Second was petty production such as the yeoman farmer or prosperous artisan enjoyed. Third was the putting-out system, which had, in Europe, begun to evolve into the system of manufactures. In Africa and the Americas, European merchants put out firearms, which were used by their clients to capture people (to sell as slaves), to kill animals (for their furs), and to destroy a wealth of common ecologies. The fourth means of organizing the exploitation of labor was the mode of production that united all of the others in the sphere of circulation—namely, the ship."

The first and last here were the most hierarchical and, consequently, most violent of these four organisations of human labour. The ship itself, as already noted, would become the essential engine of what was by then a trans-national commercial enterprise and was, as a result, the "machine of empire", that which made empire possible. But here we must pay attention to those unfortunate sailors [of several nations] again:

"Since conditions aboard ship were harsh and wages often two or three years in arrears, sailors mutinied, deserted, rioted, and altogether resisted naval service. Over and against these chronic struggles for freedom and money, the state used violence and terror to man

its ships and to man them cheaply, preying often on the poorest, most ethnically diverse populations. The press-gang, which swaggered to brutal prominence during the 1660s, swung bigger sticks in the 1690s as the demand for maritime labor continued to swell. For sailors, the press-gang represented slavery and death: three out of four pressed men died within two years, with only one in five of the dead expiring in battle. Those lucky enough to survive could not expect to be paid, as it was not uncommon, writes John Ehrman, the pre-eminent scholar of the navy of the 1690s, for a seaman to be owed a decade's wages. The figure of the starving, often lame sailor in the seaport town became a permanent feature of European civilization, even as the motley crew became a permanent feature of modern navies.

The dynamic of manning was different in merchant shipping, but the outcome was similar. As the conditions of seafaring life ebbed and flowed, as hard discipline, deadly disease, and chronic desertion thinned the ranks of the ship, the captain would take on sailors wherever he could find them. The ship became, if not the breeding ground of rebels, at least a meeting place where various traditions were jammed together in a forcing house of internationalism."

Consequently, official navies, whether merchant or military, were full of miserable sailors from many places, many of whom didn't want to be there and who had been put there in the first place against their own will. But it was that or risk death in an act of desertion [which many attempted nevertheless]. Sailors, in fact, would often swap sides and it was not impossible that an English sailor might fight for the English, French, Dutch and Spanish [or even for Barbary sailors against all of these and Christendom itself] during his lifetime. These countries also employed what we might think of as "state

licenced pirates" to act as freelancers acting on their behalf, ships that would exist to attack the shipping of competitor empires on the high seas. This is where we get "corsairs" or "buccaneers" from, in fact. The ship was then the only means of communication across vast watery empires but also the place where people "from below", if we might put it like that, would meet their own kind from other nations. This, as Linebaugh and Rediker have it, acted as a means to circulate revolutionary social ideas and to teach those who found themselves at sea that just because they came from different lands it did not mean that their interests were different.

Ironically, then, it was because those in authority in various acquisitive fledgling European empires wanted to create vast naval forces to accumulate wealth from new territories that they brought together thousands of [often reluctant] sailors for the first time. What would happen if these men ever decided that they didn't want to work for a government interest anymore but that they did want to work for themselves? That's how you get pirates. However, as Linebaugh and Rediker note:

"The process [of this proletarian and oppositional organisation] was slow, uneven, and hard to trace, not least because the alternative order of the common sailor was decapitated almost every time it reared its head, whether in mutiny, in strike, or in piracy. It took a long time for mariners to get, as one man put it, 'the choice in themselves'—that is, the autonomous power to organize the ship and its miniature society as they wanted. The sailor's hydrarchy went through several stages, appearing most clearly—and, to the authorities, most threateningly—when sailors organized themselves as pirates in the early eighteenth century."

When piracy proper began, then, it was not as the state-sanctioned piracy it had once been, the piracy which was there to serve one empire by attacking others. Piracy proper was a self-organisation of renegade, guerrilla sailors for their own self-determined goals, a piracy that served the group and no outside, third party interest. Consequently, "when seamen—as pirates—organized a social world apart from the dictates of mercantile and imperial authority and used it to attack merchants' property (as they had begun to do in the 1690s), then those who controlled the maritime state resorted to massive violence, both military (the navy) and penal (the gallows), to eradicate piracy." If this does not remind you of Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers on land then it should - for it is essentially the same thing: people arbitrarily imagining the right to make their own lives on their own terms and for their own survival. In both cases, states were never going to allow that and they were never going to allow those they had coerced and manipulated on land and sea to suddenly strike blows for their own freedom which might ignite across the whole political landscape, ending economic relationships as they were currently proceeding forever. The Levellers themselves, in fact, in their writings had said that "We doe not impower them to impresse or constraint any person to serve in war by Sea or Land every man's Conscience being to be satisfied in the justness of that cause wherein he hazards his life, or may destroy an others." It is the submission of Linebaugh and Rediker that such attitudes were fundamental to that of the sea-going pirates of the later seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, attitudes which made pirates and piracy oppositional to the ideas which justified state power and commerce just as both the Levellers and Diggers had before them.

Linebaugh and Rediker tell the story of the formation of the first pirates of this "revolutionary era" [i.e. the seventeenth century and beyond] as follows:

"The struggles waged by sailors of the revolutionary era for subsistence, wages, and rights and against impressment and violent discipline first took autonomous shape among the buccaneers in America. Even as buccaneering benefited the upper classes of England, France, and the Netherlands in their New World campaigns against their common enemy, Spain, common seamen were building a tradition of their own, at that time called the Jamaica Discipline or the Law of the Privateers. The tradition, which the authorities considered to be the antithesis of discipline and law, boasted a distinctive conception of justice and a class hostility toward shipmasters, owners, and gentlemen adventurers. It also featured democratic controls on authority and provision for the injured. In fashioning their hydrarchy, the buccaneers drew upon the peasant utopia called the Land of Cockayne, where work had been abolished, property redistributed, social distinctions levelled, health restored, and food made abundant. They also drew on international maritime custom, by which ancient and medieval seafarers had divided their money and goods into shares, consulted collectively and democratically on matters of moment, and elected consuls to adjudicate differences between captain and crew.

The early shapers of the tradition were those whom one English official in the Caribbean called the 'outcasts of all nations'—the convicts, prostitutes, debtors, vagabonds, escaped slaves and indentured servants, religious radicals, and political prisoners, all of whom had migrated or been exiled to the new settlements 'beyond the line.' Another royal administrator explained that the buccaneers were former servants and 'all men of unfortunate and desperate condition.' Many French buccaneers, such as Alexander Exquemelin, had been indentured servants and before that textile workers and day laborers. Most of the buccaneers were English or French, but Dutch, Irish, Scottish,

Scandinavian, Native American, and African men also joined up, often after they had in one way or another escaped the brutalities of the Caribbean's nascent plantation system.

These workers drifted to uninhabited islands, where they formed maroon communities. Their autonomous settlements were multiracial in nature and organized around hunting and gathering—usually the hunting of wild cattle and pigs and the gathering of the king of Spain's gold. These communities combined the experiences of peasant rebels, demobilized soldiers, dispossessed smallholders, unemployed workers, and others from several nations and cultures, including the Carib, Cuna, and Mosquito Indians."

Your classical late seventeenth or early eighteenth century pirate was then essentially one who, instead of being part of a land-based "maroon community", had taken his place in a "multiracial maroon community" at sea. He became part of a revolutionary and oppositional culture which had plenty of reasons to hate states and navies and mercantile economic interests. Linebaugh and Rediker argue, after others to be sure, that this was a "world turned upside down" not least based on the "articles of agreement" the pirates established between and for themselves. In a long quotation it will be helpful to quote here in full, just exactly what the pirates were about is made plain:

"Pirates distributed justice, elected officers, divided loot equally, and established a different discipline. They limited the authority of the captain, resisted many of the practices of the capitalist merchant shipping industry, and maintained a multicultural, multiracial, multinational social order. They sought to prove that ships did not have to be run in the brutal and oppressive ways of the merchant service and the Royal Navy. The dramatist John

Gay demonstrated his understanding of all this when, in 'Polly', he had Macheath disguise himself as the black pirate named Morano and sing a song to the tune of 'The World's Turned Upside Down.'

The pirate ship was democratic in an undemocratic age. The pirates allowed their captain unquestioned authority in chase and battle, but otherwise insisted that he be 'governed by a Majority.' As one observer noted, 'They permit him to be Captain, on Condition, that they may be Captain over him.' They gave him none of the extra food, the private mess, or the special accommodations routinely claimed by merchant and naval captains. Moreover, as the majority gave, so did it take away, deposing captains for cowardice, for cruelty, for refusing 'to take and plunder English Vessels,' or even for being 'too Gentleman-like.' Captains who dared to exceed their authority were sometimes executed. Most pirates, 'having suffered formerly from the ill-treatment of their officers, provided carefully against any such evil' once they were free to organize the ship after their own hearts. Further limitations on the captain's power were embodied in the person of the quartermaster, who was elected to represent and protect the interests of the crew, and in the institution of the council, the gathering that involved every man on the ship and always constituted its highest authority.

The pirate ship was egalitarian in a hierarchical age, as pirates divided their plunder equally, levelling the elaborate structure of pay ranks common to all other maritime employments. Captain and quartermaster received one and one half to two shares of plunder; minor officers and craftsmen were given one and one quarter or one and one half; all others got one share each. Such egalitarianism flowed from material facts. To merchant captains it was galling that 'there is so little Government and Subordination among [pirates], that they

are, on Occasion, all Captains, all Leaders.' By expropriating a merchant ship (after a mutiny or a capture), pirates seized the means of maritime production and declared it to be the common property of those who did its work. Rather than working for wages using the tools and larger machine (the ship) owned by a merchant capitalist, pirates abolished the wage and commanded the ship as their own property, sharing equally in the risks of common adventure.

Pirates were class-conscious and justice-seeking, taking revenge against merchant captains who tyrannized the common seaman and against royal officials who upheld their prerogative to do so. Indeed, the 'Distribution of Justice' was a specific practice among pirates. After capturing a prize vessel, pirates would 'distribute justice' by inquiring about how the ship's commander treated his crew. They then 'whipp'd and pickled' those 'against whom Complaint was made.' Bartholomew Roberts's crew considered the matter so important that they formally designated one of their men—George Willson, who was no doubt a fierce and lusty man—the 'Dispencer of Justice.' Pirates roughed up and occasionally executed captured captains; a few bragged of their avenging justice upon the gallows. Pirate captain Howell Davis claimed that 'their reasons for going a pirating were to revenge themselves on base Merchants and cruel commanders of Ships.' Still, pirates did not punish captains indiscriminately. They often rewarded the 'honest Fellow that never abused any Sailors' and even offered to let one decent captain 'return with a large sum of Money to London, and bid the Merchants defiance.' Pirates thus stood against the brutal injustices of the merchant shipping industry, with one crew's even claiming to be 'Robbin Hoods Men.'

Pirates insisted upon their right to subsistence, the food and drink so often denied aboard the merchant or naval ship—the very shortage that led many sailors to go 'upon the account' in the first place. One mutinous sailor aboard the George Galley in 1724 responded to his captain's orders to furl the mizzen-top by saying, 'in a surly Tone, and with a kind of Disdain, So as we Eat so shall we work.' Other mutineers simply maintained that 'it was not their business to starve,' and that if a captain was making it so, hanging could be little worse. Many observers of pirate life noted the carnivalesque quality of its occasions—the eating, drinking, fiddling, dancing, and merriment—and some considered such 'infinite Disorders' inimical to good discipline at sea. Men who had suffered short or rotten provisions in other maritime employments now ate and drank 'in a wanton and riotous Way,' which was indeed their custom. They conducted so much business 'over a Large Bowl of Punch' that sobriety sometimes brought 'a Man under a Suspicion of being in a Plot against the Commonwealth'—that is, the community of the ship. The very first item in Bartholomew Roberts's articles guaranteed every man 'a Vote in Affairs of Moment' and equal title to fresh provisions and strong liquor. For some who joined, drink 'had been a greater motive . . . than Gold,' and most would have agreed with the motto 'No Adventures to be made without Belly-Timber.' The pirates of the Atlantic thus struggled to assure their health and security, their own self-preservation. The image of the freebooter as a man with a patched eye, a peg leg, and a hook for a hand suggests an essential truth: sailing was a dangerous line of work. Pirates therefore put a portion of all booty into a common fund reserved for those who sustained injuries of lasting effect, whether the loss of eyesight or of any appendage. They tried to provide for the needy.

The pirate ship was motley—multinational, multicultural, and multiracial. Governor Nicholas Lawes of Jamaica echoed the thoughts of royal officials everywhere when he

called pirates a 'banditti of all nations.' Another Caribbean official agreed: they were 'compounded of all nations.' Black Sam Bellamy's crew of 1717 was 'a mix't multitude of all Country's,' including British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Swedish, Native American, and African American, along with two dozen Africans liberated from a slave ship. The main mutineers aboard the George Galley in 1724 were an Englishman, a Welshman, an Irishman, two Scots, two Swedes, and a Dane, all of whom became pirates. Benjamin Evans's crew consisted of men of English, French, Irish, Spanish, and African descent. Pirate James Barrow illustrated the reality of this internationalism as he sat after supper 'prophanelly singing . . . Spanish and French Songs out of a Dutch prayer book.' The government often told pirates that 'they [had] no country,' and the pirates themselves agreed: when they hailed other vessels at sea, they emphasized their own rejection of nationality by announcing that they came 'From the Seas.' A colonial official reported to the Council of Trade and Plantations in 1697 that pirates 'acknowledged no countrymen, that they had sold their country and were sure to be hanged if taken, and that they would take no quarter, but do all the mischief they could.' But as a mutineer muttered in 1699, 'it signified nothing what part of the World a man liv'd in, so he Liv'd well.'"

Gabriel Kuhn, in his book *Life Under The Jolly Roger*, largely agrees with this assessment. He states that:

"Even non-radical historians concede that the 'pirate communities were ... democracies. A hundred years before the French Revolution, the pirate companies were run on lines in which liberty, equality and brotherhood were the rule rather than the exception.' The buccaneer's society has been called 'the most democratic institution in the world of the

seventeenth century,' and 'essentially communistic in its organisation.' Maritime metaphors like 'floating democracy' or 'floating republic' abound."

Kuhn, however, asks questions that Linebaugh and Rediker, Marxist historians, are never going to ask. Specifically, and usefully for my purposes, Kuhn asks after the relation of piracy to anarchy. A first notable point here is the evidence given by the likely French former buccaneer, Alexandre Exquemelin, who is one of our major sources of information for seventeenth century piracy. In writing out the articles of the Tortuga buccaneers, for example, he writes that anyone found unfaithful after taking the pirate oath of allegiance to their articles "is separated and turned out of the society". In anarchist ears like mine this sounds like the practice of freedom of association or, in this case, the denial of that freedom to those adjudged to have betrayed it and so closed the door to it in the case of a specific pirate community. In this case, Kuhn argues that on the basis of such articles pirates made rules FOR THEMSELVES which others, outsiders, were not expected to adhere to - because they weren't for them. This was SELF-ORGANISATION but it was also oppositional organisation for the values the pirates used were precisely in opposition to those that they might have expected [and many experienced] aboard a merchant or military ship in the service of a state.

Consider, for example, the articles of a pirate Captain Lowther which Gabriel Kuhn reproduces:

i. The Captain is to have two full shares; the master is to have one share and a half; the doctor, mate, gunner and boatswain, one share and a quarter.

- ii. He that shall be found guilty of taking up any unlawful weapon on board the privateer or any prize by us taken, so as to strike or abuse one another in any regard, shall suffer what punishment the Captain and majority of the Company shall think fit.
- iii. He that shall be found guilty of cowardice in the time of engagement shall suffer what punishment the Captain and the Majority shall think fit.
- iv. If any gold, jewels, silver etc., be found on board of any prize or prizes, to the value of a piece-of-eight, and the finder do not deliver it to the quartermaster in the space of 24 hours, shall suffer what punishment the Captain and the Majority shall think fit.
- v. He that is found guilty of gaming, or defrauding another to the value of a shilling, shall suffer what punishment the Captain and majority of the Company shall think fit.
- vi. He that shall have the misfortune to lose a limb, in time of engagement, shall have the sum of £150 sterling, and remain with the company as long as he shall think fit.
- vii. Good quarter to be given when called for.
- viii. He that sees a sail first, shall have the best pistol or small arm on board her.

These, as scholars judge, seem fairly common pirate articles that are reproduced in the articles of others and what they demonstrate is a pirate body that takes important decisions together, shares the booty between themselves relatively equally and has a care to the protection of the group as a whole. Contrast this, for effect, with the forced hierarchy of a merchant or military state naval vessel. The articles evince the mentality of a self-selecting and self-organising group not at all inimical to anarchist ideas of affinity and free association - with a common punishment [as other articles detail more fully] being separation from the community in the action of marooning someone. These were then "marginal men freed from [enforced] social conventions, living beyond restraint except for the few rules they set for themselves." Such "rules" included a

pirates' council, where all important decisions - including who was captain and quartermaster, and what their articles of association were - were made. Pirates were men acting on their own recognisance and to rules of conduct which they were free to either accept or reject for themselves.

We may note that this is already a step up from the state [or the commerce which merchants carry out under its auspices and protection] which presumes to demand and coerce your allegiance as a matter of its right or, if not its right, then its force instead. What's more, although there were several different pirate ships and crews, many scholars report they did not fight or prey upon each other. There was a kind of "brotherhood of the sea" where pirate respected pirate and game respected game. Each might have their own ship and crew but they allowed others to have theirs too without harassment. [We should imagine some occasional swapping of personnel between the various crews as well. After all, these crews were only ever voluntary to begin with.] Nevertheless, we can to a large degree talk about "pirate solidarity" to meaningful effect. This meant that even when sustained conflict among shipmates forced a falling out and separation of the ways [as it always could] the pirate culture of common values and a group ethic of affinity and free association allowed piracy to continue even with newly reconfigured alliances. Freedom to disagree and then to separate was a cherished freedom of the pirates no less than any other but was not one states or the merchants would grant you with their death for deserters. What Gabriel Kuhn emphasises in his account of the pirates is their freely associational collectivism and their anti-authoritarian brotherhood. They are a self-sufficient community of sea rovers who each treasure, and so consequently grant, their own agency - things which seem to have frightened their statist opponents in government. In this sense, as some suggest, we can

see their rebellion of autarkic sea-born communal mutual aid as one of values and not merely practices, like watery versions of the Levellers, Diggers or Ranters of land-based revolutionary ideas.

The most noted, indeed, iconic symbol of pirates and piracy, early in the eighteenth century, became the "Jolly Roger" in which either crossed bones or crossed swords are placed beneath a skull against a black background. [Originally not all flags used exactly the same symbols but it was some combination of similar items against a black background.] Gabriel Kuhn, after Marcus Rediker in his own book *Villains of All Nations*, sees this as a unifying symbol akin to a "gang sign" which was aimed to terrify piratical opponents into submission. [Pirates, rather than being blood thirsty killers committed to annihilating every ship, and every sailor, they came upon, actually seem to have used violence as more of a last resort. They much preferred deception, trickery, or terror as means to getting their prey to simply give up their ships and their cargo. After all, in a fight it was certain that several of *your* pirate crew would suffer and die too - maybe even you personally. Thus, it was better all round if prey were simply convinced to give in before an inevitable battle could occur.] It is not known exactly where "Jolly Roger" came from but one theory Kuhn espouses which tickles me in all the right places is that it is a knowing and humorous derivation of the epithet "Old Roger" which was a common moniker for the devil in these times. Pirates were then announcing themselves as a joyous company of autonomous sea devils who would do you in if you didn't give up. That they had their own flag - and not a nation's flag - can be seen as deliberate action by the pirates to describe themselves as men without nation and beyond nation, men who chose THEIR OWN allegiances. As Marcus Rediker then states in *Villains of All Nations*:

"When pirates created a flag of their own, as they did for the first time in the early eighteenth century, they made a new declaration: they would use colors to symbolize the solidarity of a gang of ... outlaws, thousands strong and self-organized in daring ways, in violent opposition to the all-powerful nation-states of the day. By flying the skull and the crossbones, they announced themselves as 'the Villains of all Nations.'"

Flying such a flag, then, was an act of defiance against the very organisation of the world into nations and states to which all people were imagined to belong. It was an outright rejection of this very idea and the presumption to create one's own community, one's own allegiance, to organise yourselves, under one's own flag. It was a claim to be able to make one's own fraternity from one's own freely chosen and arbitrated associations. In this respect it is then interesting that Gabriel Kuhn wants to associate Louise Michel's similar waving and choosing of a black flag in a protest in France in the early 1880s in preference to the more regular socialist red one with the pirate's Jolly Roger. Kuhn thinks this "hard to believe" as something "purely coincidental" and its subsequent adoption as the anarchist flag of choice is then hardly without its own significance. It injects some of that piratical autarkic brotherhood into anarchist affairs at the very least and perhaps suggests yet another self-identifying group of people who refuse the impressed service of the state or commerce and who act arbitrarily in their own interests to create affinities and alliances that states and governments should not control - or even have any part in. In fact, like pirates, shouldn't both of these communities of the black flag then be seen as those who prey upon the state and commerce as private gain, as an act of pillaging and as an act of defiance, an act signifying the invalidity of such organisations of human relations adjudged according to black flag values which they of themselves invent and maintain? I think it so.

But this then brings us to a crucial question for my purposes and one which Kuhn also recognises too: Is this anarchy? The "this" under discussion here is, of course, piracy and this question is a common one in pirate literature - regardless of the author's political persuasion. Of course, for some of these writers, "anarchy" will be imagined as something wholly bad and destructive, perhaps something that, politically, they imagine with horror. Yet the equation or question of their equation is often made so is not a question we should be shy of asking, especially not in the context I have created here. So, is "an-argh-chy" a real thing? Can we bring these things together in a profitable and compatible way? As Gabriel Kuhn phrases it: "were the golden age pirates really anarchists?" One obvious [and quite narrow] answer to this question is that they were quite obviously not. In the seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries "anarchism", as a conscious political orientation, had not yet either been theorized or invented. But that, as I've already said, is a rather narrow view of anarchy and its one I've not at all been afraid of ignoring before. So, looking at things more broadly, this is how Kuhn answers his own question:

"There appear to be two main ways to respond: 1. If being anarchistic means to live outside the control of the nation-state, or any form of institutionalized authority, then the golden age pirates were surely anarchistic—as much as the nomadic and 'primitive' people they have been compared to. 2. If being anarchistic means to consciously attempt to realize social ideals of universal equality and justice, then the golden age pirates were hardly anarchistic. Too many indications exist that they had no social ideals at all, or at least none that extended beyond a community of 'brothers' who pledged loyalty to one another. If there was an anarchism of golden age pirates, it hence lay in their rejection of institutionalized authority and in attempts at egalitarian community building."

Here, of course, Kuhn raises an interesting and necessary question of his own [which he himself doesn't ask]: what is anarchy? He seems here to take it to be "consciously attempting to realise social ideals of universal equality and justice" but that is, to say the least, a questionable definition. If, for example, you read the writings of Albert Libertad, E. Armand or Renzo Novatore [or numerous other French and Italian writers between 1880 and 1920, not to mention American-based anarchists in the same time frame such as Benjamin Tucker, Voltairine de Cleyre or even Emma Goldman] is that the definition you would emerge with? I doubt it. This question of what we take "anarchy" to be, however, is obviously a key one if we are going to ask about the confluence and compatibility of pirates and piracy with it. Kuhn argues, on the grounds pirates didn't fight for UNIVERSAL social liberty, that then pirates weren't anarchists. But neither E. Armand nor Renzo Novatore [the latter very much a landlubbing pirate of his own kind himself] fought for UNIVERSAL social liberty either - and no one seems to have any problem describing them [or any of the others I named] as anarchists. I myself have made reference to their lives and writings multiple times throughout my time consciously thinking about anarchy and anarchists - and their lack of social concern or requirement for universal equality and justice as a societal metanarrative has not been any deterrent in that respect - as it seems not to be for others either. We may then question if Kuhn's second definition is legitimate and can stand.

In fact, I think his first definition is actually much nearer the mark and cancels out the second, unnecessary definition which Christianises anarchy in a way at least Nietzsche, and subsequent Nietzschean anarchists [this is not an irrelevance as Kuhn himself in the very book I am interacting with here wants to give a Nietzschean reading of pirates later on], would whole-heartedly have disapproved of. What characterises anarchy is its

rejection of "institutionalized authority" and its attempts at creating self-arbitrating, self-organising relations [called, by some, community]. This, as I put it most forthrightly, is a simple matter of SELF-ORGANISATION. This is the anarchistic principle [one to remember throughout this book, in fact]. And its one, as we have seen, that the pirates embraced entirely as the foundation of their very existence in actions, once carried out, which would destroy any possibility of their fulfilling Kuhn's second definition as actual historical pirate activity actively worked against it. So, no, there was no "anarchist fight for the benefit of *all*" in piracy. But I do not take that to be anarchy. I take that to be its turning it into a religion, crusade or dogma, the creation of a spook before which people should bow in order to be inhabited by it. That, in the end, is NOT anarchy; it is anti-anarchy. The pirates were right not to engage in such a fight for their fight was the more anarchist one, the fight for self-made and self-run community, a freedom of relations and associations that respected personal agency and attempted to deal fairly with those who chose to be a part of it in a kind of pirate mutual aid. That is anarchy as I understand it. That is pirate an-argh-chy rather than the evangelicalisation and universalisation of the spooks "equality" and "freedom" and "justice". These spooks, in fact, once you are inhabited by them, more often than not only create cops in whatever spaces they are active. They are copthink.

Taking Kuhn's fourth chapter, which I have been following here, out of order we can linger on the question of the compatibility [or otherwise] of piracy and anarchy a bit longer. In his sixth section of this chapter Kuhn wants to ask after the "revolutionary, radical and proletarian" credentials of pirates. But, actually, we get a similar assessment as before from Kuhn for, yet again, the distinction made is between having "a conscious all-encompassing political agenda—i.e. an agenda to fundamentally change all of

society's organizational structures" and "contributing to a disruption of society's organizational structures that pose[s] a fundamental threat to the political order". In other words, Kuhn wants, all over again, to contrast actions which simply deny someone's imagined political reality and values, and theories put ahead of oneself which one wants to impress upon the world for oneself. Yet we already know from our discussion here to date that pirates were content to make their own communities and relations based upon pleasing themselves and were not potential or actual benevolent dictators set on "changing the world" and enforcing that state of affairs on others as dictators or tyrants. In fact, any "changing the world" they did was as a consequence of their desire to rule themselves and construct their own networks of relations; it was derivative. Their "revolutionary identity" was thus consequential upon their choices for themselves rather than as a deliberate program conceived to coerce and control others. It was revolutionary and radical, then, in its effects but not as a deliberate making of the world whole and entire. They were marginal defiers of convention and law much more than they were those impressing their own versions of these things on society as a whole.

You will not be surprised to find that I, once again, imagine this to be a very anarchistic thing to do for anarchists themselves, I propose, are not those who want to impress the world to their standards. Even the Italian anarchist communist, Errico Malatesta, as I never tire of saying, believed that anarchy was in the people *emancipating themselves* and NOT in having it forced upon them. Anarchy, like sea-borne piracy, is SELF-ORGANISATION, self-realisation, it is not creating a way the world should be and forcing it into that mould. In fact, that is the opposite of it. So the pirates' marginal defiance of state power and governmental coercion to certain economic relations is something I

regard as authentically anarchist and "revolutionary" activity. Moreover, its an anarchy of practice which pirates make a matter of their life and death, something to which they commit whole-heartedly - and this speaks only to its, and their, credit as a consequence.

Consequently, I find Kuhn's searching for "a self-conscious political aspect" to pirate actions - as if this were necessary in order to validate it as authentically positive political action - a total red herring. The self-conscious political aspect of the pirates' activity WAS THEIR ACTUAL ACTIVITY. What was political about pirates was their PIRACY and how they went about actualising it as a way of life in the world. It doesn't matter if their targets were "indiscriminate" nor if "they were probably more concerned about their personal freedom... than in saving mankind". "Saving mankind" is for saviours and religions in any case and neither piracy nor anarchy is, nor should be, that. Pirates, as Kuhn finally acknowledges, although without regarding piracy as a legitimate form of "anarchy in itself", were the rejectors of "class society altogether". They were not people who worked for a "working class revolutionary agenda". But I see no problem with that and neither do I see any incompatibility with an anarchy I have distilled down to the principle: "SELF-ORGANISATION". This is the revolutionary pirate radicality. It is this or it is nothing.

When Kuhn comes to evaluate the "political legacy" of the Golden Age pirates he has concentrated on in his last chapter, however, this doesn't seem to be good enough for him. He writes in this conclusion how his book has repeatedly questioned "unconditionally embracing the golden age pirates as role models for radical politics". [Indeed, he concludes that it is an "impossibility" to do so.] He describes the two central problems he has with this idea as the pirates' lack of a "wider ethical and political

perspective" [basically, and in my terms but not Kuhn's, he wishes pirates had been benevolent dictators who wanted to impress their imagined "just" values upon the world] and, secondly, the pirates' lack of "a level of coordination that could have allowed for establishing a sustainable counterculture and an effective communal defence against their enemies". [Here he seems to wish pirates had become their own state, society and police force.] In both of these points I think Kuhn's basic problem is that he completely misunderstands pirates and piracy [not to mention anarchy] because he wishes to impose his own, incompatible views upon them instead which act as his judge and jury in the matter.

In the first case, for example, "individual" radicality, or radicality for us who choose it but not for everybody else who doesn't, seems not really radical enough for Gabriel Kuhn. In his discussion of this point, for instance, he betrays his own metanarrative and collectivist allegiances when he says that "theories of liberation stressing the need to liberate yourself (and the rest will follow) build on a strict dichotomy between the individual and society that, in the end, only serves capitalism and the state, as it undermines the collective effort necessary to bring about the fundamental social change needed to free us all." Yet not only is this argument partisan in framing its goal - as the writing of egoists from Stirner to Goldman to Armand - who would argue that your own emancipation is not contingent or consequent on anyone else following - would demonstrate - but what Kuhn neglects to mention here is that no one is forced to want the dogma of "freeing us all" as an imposition upon the world in the first place. Much less are they committed to what seems such a bloody, unforeseeable [in its outcomes and consequences] and unnecessary fight. Kuhn here simply sets *his* aim and imposes it on everyone. That is a most unanarchistic - and non-piratical - thing to do.

In fact, I think its simply a misunderstanding - for pirates were not in that position anyway. They were men [almost exclusively!] who found themselves far from home as a result of state violence and impressment who simply wanted a life of freedom instead of the servitude they had previously been forced into. They grasped an opportunity for freedom and welcomed anyone else who did the same. They made the most of their circumstances. They did not immediately rush headlong to the nearest capital intent on some righteous crusade for universal equality, freedom and justice and, moreover, would have been stupid and doomed to do so. Instead, and in a way comparable to the Diggers, they seem to have taken the view that freedom, and exercising it, is a matter for all of us, an opportunity each can take if they will grasp it. And the more the merrier - but certainly not as a dogma or crusade. True liberty, in fact, only comes when one does liberate *oneself* and until one liberates *oneself* one is never truly free - whatever one's external circumstances. Pirates did liberate themselves, internally and externally, and they welcomed such as did the same as opportunity presented itself. This may not accord with evangelical collectivist dogmas - but then it has no duty to do so to begin with.

Such dogmas as these as Kuhn betrays here leak into his second point too for Kuhn seems to judge that, somehow, and in some way not quite explained, what the pirates achieved was a disappointment or somehow not good enough. There is a persistent "if only" in Kuhn's analysis which never seems to go away. This bothers me because it tends to the suggestion that there is some ideal or better destination to which the pirates, or pirates in general, *should* be heading, some utopian ideal or destination which is the actual and real goal of social anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism which the pirates [and, who knows, perhaps most anarchists in Kuhn's mind] fall short of. If this is the case, I reject the idea completely and out of hand. And, in fact, the pirates function as my

example of why this is and why it should be as an example of anarchy. Put simply, if anarchy is self-organisation, as I contend, it is then people who get to decide *their own* destinations and the point, purpose and function of *their own* lives and activity. There is NO idealistic utopia to which all "true" radicals or revolutionaries "should" be tending: there is only the one we pick for ourselves for the reason or reasons we find important in so doing. So, yes, Kuhn may be entirely correct to point out that the pirates' way of life could only exist in certain circumstances and was not foresighted enough or well enough arranged to withstand the maritime state persecution which, soon enough, came its way but, taking this point of view on board, SO WHAT? Pirates were living a self-determined, self-organised kind of life. One presumes they were eventually sent to the gallows or the bottom of the sea with the defiant look on their faces of those who lived and died on their own terms. If anarchy [or, indeed, piracy] means anything, then surely it means that.

Pirates, as Kuhn himself recognises in a section of his fourth chapter, were essentially sea-born guerrillas who lived by expropriation. They were men of "individual conscience" and had to be for this is the only way piracy [and anarchy, in my opinion] can work. You can't force someone to be a pirate [note how there were punishments prescribed for cowardice or for not whole-heartedly joining in with the drinking culture - pirates wanted to be with men committed to their culture and its protection from the heart] and you can't force someone to be an anarchist either. These must be things freely given and committed to by people themselves and nothing less will suffice. Such relationships only work if they are mutual and on an equally committed footing. These were the values pirates espoused in the setting up of their ship communities. It seems hard to imagine, however, how this could become the thing Kuhn seems to wish it had become for, as

Kuhn himself quotes in his section on pirates as guerrillas, guerrillas are "not an army but small armed groups, intentionally fragmented". Guerrillas exist to attack a far superior force but to engage it on their own terms. They are not formed to be an entire society or, as Kuhn intimates, to exist on a "grand scale". Kuhn has, in fact, already noted in his book that pirates lacked a "revolutionary consciousness" - and presumably he regards this as to their detriment. I, however, do not, for their revolution was living life on their own terms rather than in the terms of theoreticians who write books or impose end goals upon society at large. The pirates' revolution was their defiance and their determination to form relationships for their own benefit and run in ways they chose. This, I maintain, is also the anarchist's revolution, their insurrection against an authoritarian world society, too.

Peter Lamborn Wilson [AKA Hakim Bey], in his book *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs and European Renegades*, raises this point when he argues that "Pirates were very nearly communistic in their pure state." However, pirates, as Lamborn Wilson further remarks:

"don't fit the Marxist definition of 'social bandit' (i.e., 'primitive revolutionary') because pirates have no 'social' context, no society of peasants for whom they serve as focal elements of resistance. Marxists like [historian Eric] Hobsbawm never include the pirates among their approved 'precursors' of true radicalism because they see the pirates - at best - as individuals involved in resistance simply as a form of self-aggrandizement and primitive accumulation. They forget that groups of pirates formed their own social spheres, and that the 'governments' of these groups (as expressed in ships' 'articles') were both anarchistic in affording maximum individual freedoms, and communistic in eliminating economic hierarchy. The social organization of the pirates has no parallel in any of the states of the

15-18th centuries - except Rabat-Salé. The Republic of Bou Regreg was not a pure pirate utopia, but it was a state founded on piratical principles; in fact, it was the only state ever founded on these principles."

Peter Lamborn Wilson's book is about a tale to the side of the others I have referenced here [which were about 'European' pirates operating across the Atlantic in general] because it focuses on North African [and necessarily Muslim-influenced] pirates of that region, specifically those of Rabat-Salé [colloquially known as the Sally Rovers] in what is now Morocco. But his point here is well made that many, even scholars with some socially-focused political commitment, often see in pirates nothing but selfish accumulators of personal wealth. They are proto-capitalists rather than proto-anarchists - and this largely because of what they lack - something Gabriel Kuhn himself examples in his own way - which is a necessarily universalising and metanarrative social concern to change the course of history.

This analysis, in my view, is simply to ignore what makes pirates into pirates which is what they do and how they go about it - a life of expropriation living on their own recognisance. That is their model and revolutionary message, one as revolutionary to a Marxist historian as to a governmental official or the chairman of a Board of Trade. Their revolution is "we shall live how we want, for our own benefit and according to our own purposes: we shall organise ourselves". It should be considered by all that this is actually the only real revolution there really ever is. [Don't believe me? Try doing it!] Live for today, live for yourself, live with such as will be brothers and sisters and make common cause. But never try to impose a way of being upon the whole world. In fact, always resist EXACTLY THAT. Be pirates, be guerrillas, be "heretics" [in the words of Peter

Lamborn Wilson]. Be participants in a free world where everyone who is free may go wherever they will. That is the anarchy of piracy, an anarchy of agency, of autonomy, of free association, brotherhood and mutual aid, an intentional community of the sea outside the law and beyond the state.

So far in this book I've discussed a bit about guerrillas and a lot more about pirates. But what about anarchists, the third grouping in my title, specifically? For that I turn to some of the writing of the contemporary egoist anarchist, Wolfi Landstreicher. In doing so, I am not claiming Landstreicher is a spokesperson for anything - such as "the anarchist faction". I am merely saying he is a modern anarchist, a particularly articulate one, who has some noteworthy points to make. Anarchists, in my estimation, are people who think for themselves and emancipate and articulate their own agency and autonomy anyway [Landstreicher agrees with this] so if you claim allegiance to this description of yourself but think differently to what comes next in this book then that's quite correctly up to you to articulate otherwise for yourself. I offer only ideas, not dogmas. I imagine, I don't lay down a law I could not [and would not wish to] enforce anyway.

So I have so far understood anarchy, and piracy as anarchy, in a certain way. This way is, to my mind, getting at something completely necessary about anarchy: its life as self-organisation. Self-organisation is an activity, its something you do. If you are not *doing* it then there is no way you are being an anarchist and if you are... well then you just might be. This SELF-organisation also immediately puts you at odds with those, who imagine themselves part of a social hierarchy and above you, that would want to organise you for themselves [as pirates with states]. Self-organisation is then oppositional behaviour, behaviour which opposes those who would organise you. This is major for that could turn

out to be all those who feel themselves part of that hierarchical society you find yourself in, the great mass of people in general. Such anarchistic self-organisation is not then about acquiescing or "fitting in" and immediately marks you out as a troublemaker and disobedient. It is an egoistic behaviour for it makes the claim that I will organise myself rather than allow myself to be organised by others, much less conceding their claim to be able to organise you as of right in the first place. It is, as egoist anarchist Wolfi Landstreicher I am turning to discuss now has called it in a series of connected writings that extends over about 10 years from the mid 90s to the mid 2000s, "willful disobedience".

Wolfi Landstreicher [who has also been known as Feral Faun and, latterly, as Apio Ludd in his anarchist existence to date], an American anarchist who has caused a few ripples in the online anarchist hemisphere [even though he almost entirely - and almost certainly correctly - seems to eschew it himself], states that the purpose of his past publication *Willful Disobedience* was to be "a vehicle for expressing ideas that reflect how I have striven to project my life and my battle against the present social order, with the hope of provoking discussion and discovering new accomplices in rebellion." He further makes the point that it was about "opposing to every form of authority the self-determination of individuals who refuse all domination" and describes it as "insurrectionary" because this stance he takes recognises that authority "must be attacked and destroyed" if we actually want to create lasting lives of our own for ourselves. In some respects, then, this mentality acts as a response to Gabriel Kuhn's complaint about pirates that they didn't think ahead and so got wiped out when the acquisitive capitalist empires got their collective act together in order to destroy these self-organising sea dogs and secure their own way of colonialist, capitalist life via sea-borne hydrarchy. Ironically, it is

probably exactly this that Landstreicher, about 300 years later, wishes to attack - and for the reason of self-organisation. He states:

"Within the present social context our lives as individuals have been made alien to us; the interactions and activities that create this society are not based on the singularity of our unconstrained dreams and desires, but only serve the continuing reproduction of a dominating social order by channeling the energy of desire into that reproduction through a variety of institutions and systems which integrate to form civilized society: the state, capital, work, technology, religion, education, ideology, law... Opposition to this begins when we as individuals rise up in willful disobedience and begin attacking and destroying all institutions of domination, not as a cause, but for ourselves, because we want to create our own games..."

Not as a cause. As a matter of our will to self-organisation. This seems to be key to the project and the mentality that animates it. It is what, for me, unites guerrillas, pirates and anarchists in this book. What then follows in the collected version of *Willful Disobedience* that I studied and read is five volumes of short, collected pieces and two supplementary volumes given their own titles: "Against the Logic of Submission" and "The Network of Domination". It is fair to say that the pieces themselves do not deviate greatly from central themes and ideas [anarchism is hardly the most theoretical political philosophy in the world to begin with - and egoistic anarchism like Landstreicher's is possibly even less so] and so it makes sense in my explanation of it if I lay out quite simply what sort of attitude and activity Landstreicher in this project is eager to promote. This, as it turns out, will include regular pieces about "projectuality", the need not to turn ourselves into some kind of vanguard, making things consistently about

ourselves and our desires rather than the overarching cause that Kuhn became obsessed with in evaluating pirates, and acting in revolt and insurrection rather than as some kind of therapy that is an illusion to feel better about ourselves in the bad world we are in. Landstreicher's "willful disobedience" is not then simply a stance which gives us an identity; it is activity aimed at changing external circumstances too, not least due to the effects of our egoistic self-consciousness which require us to act.

Volume one of this project already covers several years worth of what must have been sporadic material, running, as it does, from 1996-1999. It will be instructive to go through this material to see what sort of ground it lays out before us. Already here, in the very first piece, Landstreicher strikes a keynote of his mentality - that we act "without asking permission" [the title of the first piece]. Here it is not a matter of waiting for "masses and classes" to rise up [historically, this hardly ever happens because it is, of necessity, intrinsically difficult to arrange] but of I myself rising up against them, these being things which are relationships which confine and define me. [This is what Gabriel Kuhn spoke against as not good enough in discussing pirates using his collectivist and metanarrative mentality.] We must then, according to Landstreicher, deliberately become "those... who never again want to ask permission" for any course of action in life which we determine, we must stop engaging in "the reproduction of society" which "depends upon our obedience". We must choose the life of willful disobedience that instantiates our life as oppositional to those who would require our obedience in any and all of its forms [like the pirates did and like guerrillas do]. It then follows that "willful disobedience must become an insurrection of unique individuals intent on razing society to the ground" and this is a matter of "stealing your life back", the subject of the second piece, from especially those who seek to control it by means of carefully controlled,

economically necessary [for the capitalist], artificial scarcity. In this second piece Landstreicher makes the case that our lives are de-individualised in terms of their agency "in order to maintain social control" and that, consequently, acting without asking permission will involve once more demanding and using that personal agency which social control wants to denude us of. This, put in egoist terms, is your basic anarchist script of direct action and acting directly for yourself in your own interest.

Landstreicher's ideas about "social control" reappear in a later piece in the first volume of texts where they focus on the family and the education of children. It is Landstreicher's thesis that, under 'normal' circumstances, children are to be turned into "beings useful to society" [where "society" is here a mentality in itself and not merely a useful linguistic object] and so society, through the family and education of children, acts to condition children into becoming "members of society" - something which of course means those who are conformed to society too. It is all about creating people determined to accept their enslavement and the humiliations and inauthenticity which go along with becoming a societal slave. Landstreicher here refers to a "global system of social control" which "compels people to participate in its reproduction in order to guarantee themselves a certain level of survival". It reminds one of slaves who, having been captured, were set to work on the plantations and told to work or die. Consequently, as Landstreicher notes, "As long as the domination of this system seems to be inevitable and eternal, most people will adjust themselves and even feel a resigned contentment with their 'lot'." Rather than accept this "infantile adulthood", however, Landstreicher counsels that "anarchist insurgents need to develop much fiercer, riskier games—games of violent attack against this system of control."

At this point in the first volume of texts, however, we get an interesting aside. In a piece titled "Fear of Conflict", Landstreicher addresses the "fetish for unity" that can afflict anarchist groups of people. [I do not here address socialists, communists, Marxists or "Leftists" generally as they do not concern me. I write as an anarchist for anarchists.] He writes that "it is assumed that 'because we are all anarchists' we must all really want the same thing." But, if you have ever been an anarchist amongst anarchists, even in the toxic, bitterly argumentative online spaces they often create, you know that this is horseshit that is not true at all. Moreover, we might legitimately ask if it SHOULD be true at all. It seems to me that there isn't an anarchist past or present that you can read about who wasn't aware, simultaneous to the enunciation of their own beliefs and ideas, that there were others over there also claiming the self-description "anarchist" who thought different things and had different ideas about how to go about them. Anarchism is NOT a dogma, a party or a church [so Renzo Novatore]: its a living, breathing, individually-articulated practice of ideas. As I have put it elsewhere before, it is SELF-ORGANISATION. But knowing that anarchy is self-organisation doesn't tell you how to go about your self-organisation. It just tells you what to do, not how. Not only, then, is such a thing difficult to have "unity" about, it almost seems set up to discourage it - for what might self-organisation have to do with unity as a matter of fact or before any other considerations?

As it turns out, Landstreicher is against such a "fetish for unity". Anarchists do not all need to agree on what they think or how they will do anything BEFORE they are allowed to do anything. They do not even all need to agree on anything at all. Anarchy is, well, ANARCHY as I might say it! So, as Landstreicher seems to say here, and as I agree, we need to get past this childish belief that unless we are in agreement something is wrong.

It is, in fact, that whole mentality which is wrong and which leads to endless and pointless dialogues in which we try to seek agreement that we never needed to act as anarchists to begin with. Landstreicher insists that we keep our egoism fully intact and argues that in being reduced to the unit of a generality in a forced need for agreement all we do is hamper even our ability to ever destroy an authority which itself is based on such a form of social control. Society itself, the thing we are fighting against, is about people all agreeing [or being coerced to agree] on how it will progress. Landstreicher's argument here is that it is not just a matter of what it agrees on [and so whether this by itself is judged good or bad, useful or useless] but also of the act of requiring this agreement to begin with. In other words, the beneficial mentality Landstreicher sees and tries to cultivate here is our acting without permission, our acting for ourselves. I can only assume, on this basis, that Landstreicher would be entirely pro-pirate inasmuch as this is exactly what they did in regard to the society of their day. The markers of authentic revolt against social control that Landstreicher then seeks are relationships based only on "affinities between individuals who insist on making their lives their own" and "the recognition of the singularity of each individual". "The need for agreement", in other words, is a false desire and a product of false thinking should it become a dogma. It is something injurious to our own direct action necessitated by the self-organisational character of anarchy.

That we are, and actively continue to become, such self-organisers, is really the theme of the first volume of texts of *Willful Disobedience*, a volume which ends with musings on "technology" that reveal Landstreicher's unease at our becoming beguiled by it. [I have already mentioned that Landstreicher largely refuses to use the Internet and, as we shall see shortly, he prefers the activity of doing something for himself to the passivity of

interaction with capitalist products which reproduce capitalist-authoritarian society in their use.] Landstreicher in fact boldly claims at the start of this final piece of the first volume that "Technology is a social system" and this is, of course, absolutely correct. It is entirely, as he maintains, "a system of relationships that determines the interactions of human beings with each other and with their environment in such a way as to perpetuate the system." So, in criticising technology, it is not that this or that gadget is necessarily bad "in itself" [there is, on this argument, of course, no "in itself" at all], but it is a matter of what networks of relationships one inserts oneself into in so doing and so what ecosystems one helps maintain by one's participation in them. With technology, then, we should not be tricked into debate about individual gadgets or tools and their usefulness or lack of it, but engage ourselves with systems thinking. A prime example of this that comes immediately to my mind is medical technology. Lots of people will tell you they need or require this or that product of medical science, for example, but rather less of them will be prepared to discuss, or even have the ability to discuss, the massive amount of political and economic activity, as well as social control, which is necessitated in order to produce the thing they say is helpful and that they need. The point here is that there is no consequenceless technology but few people ever seriously address its consequences and the social control of both people and the environment that it includes.

Today, so Landstreicher maintains, we live in a world of "impersonal" and "indirect" social control which acts largely by shaping the environment we live in - and that necessarily technologically. This is authoritarian in nature and exploitative in purpose in our experience of it. As a result, "Technology quite literally controls the activities of people in their daily lives" from the clocking in and out at work which makes sure we don't "steal

time" from our bosses to the algorithmically controlled social media we use which pushes information at us all day long whilst trying to induce us never to look away from the screen. We might think of this latter activity as "recreation", time out from the world, but Landstreicher has thoughts on that too:

"Even the recreational use of technology—television, computer games, recorded music and so on— is a form of social control. Without even dealing with the social history of these means of entertainment as products of work, one can easily see their role in controlling the activities of people. Through these machines, millions of people take in the ideas and images fed to them, maybe, in the case of computer games, flicking a button or moving a joy-stick in pseudo-interaction with a passively ingested image. None of these passive consumers of entertainment technology are creating their own pleasures, their own interactions, their own lives. None are a threat to authority."

In that quote, we see the connection with the rest of the first volume of texts: passive consumption is not the self-organisation of a person of direct action, an instantiation of a personally actualised version of anarchy. Instead, it is being lazily induced to fall in with the world through values ingested in passive experiences created by hierarchical and authoritarian capitalism. A person happy to lay in bed all night shooting prostitutes in the face in some computer game simulation of reality whilst listening to a millionaire croon empty words about "revolution" on their music system is a person not in the streets feeding homeless people, expropriating wealth to support themselves or share with others, or fixing up people's homes with stolen electricity by fixing their meter for them. Landstreicher's plea throughout this first volume is for us to become pro-active individuals intimately concerned with the course of our lives who insist on taking back

control of them. Landstreicher's point in this first volume of texts is that that is more than merely a mentality: ITS AN ACTIVITY. A constant and consistent activity.

And so we come to the second volume of texts which are from the year 2000 and are considerably more in number than the first volume. Here we find texts on morality, organisation, the point of an anarchist revolution of social life, the need for socially insurrectional action, alienation, institutions, relationships, kinds of thinking and anti-militarism. Also slipped in here are a couple more texts about technology. The impression given, as it should be, is of someone fleshing out his own personal beliefs and expressing them as insurrectionally important ideas and analyses. In the details of these pieces he and I begin to differ in our opinions but neither he nor I would worry about that for - remember - the point of none of this is a "fetish for unity" or "the necessity to agree" but that each of us approaches our life in the world as ours to be articulating and organising for ourselves and according to our own self-educating logic. It is certainly the case that thoughtful, engaged, self-actualised associates with whom we have some affinity can help us with that project - and much fun can be had in so doing. But that doesn't mean we always have to agree with them.

Yet, as Landstreicher starts this second volume with a piece about violence and morality, I find myself in complete agreement with him when he states: "When dealing with the question of how to battle the social order, there is no place for morality." His point seems to be that "democracy" [even in a true form, let alone the stunted, bastardised and corrupted version modern capitalist-authoritarian governments foist upon us] is antipathetic to revolutionary purposes. One cannot act in a revolutionary way in a democracy because one is coerced to incessant and [at least for democracy's sake]

necessary agreement which leads to a life of unceasing compromise that doesn't end up pleasing anybody in an authentic way. Democracy, then, is a revolution killer. Democracy is that against which revolutions fight because, and if only because, you didn't choose it: it has been imposed upon you. The moral question comes in here when the question of violence comes into our revolution against imposed democracy. It is a question democracy itself will push front and centre, imagining it gives the revolutionary a dilemma: should you be using violence? Is violence to live the life you want to live morally right?

This, as Landstreicher agrees, is actually a non-question. Democracy or the state does not set the terms, does not set OUR terms. The whole point of anarchy that is self-organisation is that WE SET OUR OWN TERMS. The forced, morally-inflected question "Violence or non-violence?" is for us "a meaningless dichotomy". So, as Landstreicher then goes on to say:

"The central aim of anarchist activity in the present world is the destruction of the state, of capital and of every other institution of power and authority in order to create the possibility of freedom for every individual to fully realize herself as he sees fit. This is not a moral principle, but simply - by definition - putting anarchy into practice. And it is a violent proposition. No apologies should be made about this. I am talking about the destruction of the entire social order—of civilization, if you will—and such an upheaval is, without question, far more violent than any hurricane or earthquake."

I want to dwell on this point for a moment, the point that anarchy is not a moral imposition or a moral principle. Anarchy IS NOT MORAL. That will startle some but it

shouldn't because, if you think it through [as all too many don't], it should become obviously apparent. Anarchy is not put into practice according to the moral dictates of the state, the moral concerns of its citizens or, in fact, any moral dictates at all. Anarchy, a political situation of the acknowledgement of no leaders whatsoever, is Alan Moore's "Land Of Do As You Please" from *V for Vendetta*. It is fully realising yourself and your life without outside coercion or determination. This must necessarily include moral determination or moral [as opposed to ethical] consideration. Self-organisation, the operating principle or manner of operation of anarchy, means determining your own course [and its reasons] for yourself without some imaginary external moral framework that sets the boundaries for you. Does that scare the fuck out of you? Then maybe you are not yet possessed of the guerrilla mind I mentioned earlier! Thus:

"In this light it becomes clear that we who call ourselves anarchists have no use for dealing with such questions as: 'Is property destruction violence or not?'; 'Is this an act of legitimate self-defense?' and so on. We have no reason to try to make such artificial distinctions, since our actions are determined precisely by our desire to attack and destroy power. These distinctions between 'violence' and 'nonviolence' or between 'legitimate self-defense' and the violence of attack are based in the hypocritical morality of power that serves no other purpose than to place weighted chains on our ability to act."

These comments, as Landstreicher seems to intimate in his commentary, have to do with American social disorder around the turn of the millennium when pacifist and non-pacifist activists amongst American anarchists [which David Graeber also references in his book *Direct Action*] had several and serial disagreements about what tactics they should carry out [in order to look good when reported on capitalist TV]. Then,

apparently, we had the unholy spectacle of one kind of anarchist getting another kind arrested because they were not acting as they wanted them too. Some "anarchism" that sounds like when, in reaction to anarchists being anarchists and organising themselves, you call the cops you are supposed to not believe in and to have disavowed because you think someone else might make you look bad. I have an increasingly negative amount of love for American anarchists generally and so am happy to example them showing themselves up and hopefully at least some of them realise that acting like police or calling the actual police on others is nothing short of betrayal of the self-description "anarchist", something more than good enough to make you "look bad" in anyone's eyes, not least those of anarchists themselves. Unfortunately, however, [and from my own personal experience] I know that all too many [American] anarchists think the job description 'anarchist' is being a behaviour cop and a thought and speech cop. This mentality has fuck all to do with the self-organisation either I have been talking about serially in my writing or that Wolfi Landstreicher is talking about here. So fuck all you anarchocops out there. Fuck you all the way up the ass. We cannot appeal to any potential audience by aping the morality of the government or performing nicely for TV. And we shouldn't want to anyway. We should, as Landstreicher says, want to live our own lives according to our own "desires, dreams, capabilities and circumstances". And leave others to do the same in as far as we can.

Perhaps it is then apposite that the next piece Wolfi Landstreicher writes after this is about "organisation". He discusses it in terms of something he describes as "developing an insurrectional anarchist projectuality", something which is about "specific projects of action" and how one might potentially go about these things. All this is tied to the idea that revolution is not something only to talk about; its something someone must do if its

ever going to happen. Here Landstreicher avoids the false path so many take of wanting to create an organisation that seeks membership or the party that wants to create its caucus. If any of this has a use it is not, according to Landstreicher, useful to the person, or persons, of affinity who want to struggle "for themselves, their ideas and desires." Landstreicher thinks of organisation here more functionally and of what is to be organised as developing "the tools and relationships" and "anarchist methodologies" in order to complete the desired project or action. This kind of organisation is not a thing but a process; it is a matter of knowledge and of affinity but also of relationships between people and things. This perhaps then explains Landstreicher's projectual language for this is all very focused on tasks and what needs to be done. It is a million miles away from "Let's build a party" or "What we need is a large membership group and then we can do something." Once again here the animus is self-organisation. What can I, or we if I find like-minded associates, do for ourselves? This is because "for us revolution is not a cause outside ourselves. It is our life, our fierce desire to embrace the fullness of existence that has been denied to us." Landstreicher emphasises the all-embracing aspect of this task in the next piece, "Politics or Life", when he writes:

"The decision to rebel against the social order is a decision about the totality of one's life, a decision to refuse precisely that separation which creates politics and activism. Central to this decision is the refusal to let one's life be delegated, the refusal to make demands, because one has chosen to take what one desires, to create what one wants for oneself. The actions one takes are not separate from one's life, but are its passionate outgrowth, springing from the desires and dreams of a free spirit. These actions are aimed at the utter destruction of the social order so that new possibilities of living can be explored by

everyone. Thus, they also aim at the destruction of every form of politics including that of the activist."

What this amounts to in Landstreicher's own rhetoric over several of the following pieces is "revolutionary transformation". The nature of our social situation is a control that "all industrial development" has always taken into account. The development of the state, colonialism, capitalism and the social and economic realities we know all too well today were always ultimately about being able to control society as a whole and orientating it to a particular purpose [the extraction of wealth] via particular means, i.e. the manpower of oppressed others. Thus, as Landstreicher sees it in his analysis, the issue is actually ending, and dismantling, the systems of control [technological, industrial, the system of "work" itself] and so "the end of our proletarianised condition" itself for only this is compatible with the desire to be self-organising people down to the individual level. This is about more than "resistance" since this kind of personal freedom "is best understood as the expansion of possibilities, the destruction of all limits imposed by this or any other social order." Thus, it becomes not just a matter of "organisation" but of "insurrectional anarchist organisation": "bringing together the means and relations that allow us to act for ourselves in the world."

In order to engage in this Landstreicher makes clear that it all begins with "the decision to act". It is a matter, in carrying out any identified actions or projects, of refusing false unities in order to allow space for "real affinities". I have found this out personally in my own anarchist practice. This is not the limp, insipid [and actually dangerous] relationship of the fellow party or club member [who can easily be a spy or a snitch or allow petty differences to result in you being arrested because they've decided they don't like you].

It is the affinity of discussion, argumentation, shared, lived experience and disagreement but where you can look that person naked in the eyes and know for certain that this person is on your side, walks the same road, stands up to be counted with you, and has your back even as you have theirs. This is not something trivially or simply given. It is not something notional. It can only be lived and develop for real in face to face encounter and the processes of life. Relationships of affinity are, far from the thing they are often portrayed to be, not trivial or superficial, but based in real knowledge of other people that is earned by sweating blood together. No one's trust should be given or earned easily and this is especially true for the anarchist who should expect enemies on every side - for they intend to topple society, and the systems by which it operates, entirely – in and through their own lives. Thus, affinity must be real and it should never just be given away.

This, I assume, is why Wolfi Landstreicher rejects "all formal organisation" and all "structures based on membership" or "the attempt to synchronize struggles" under one formal organisation. The point here is that such organisation is artificial; it is not based on real, lived bonds that have developed between people organically of themselves [such as, for example, the pirate relationships in their communities or as groups of guerrillas would]. Added to this, such organisations develop the tendency to develop dogmas which become canons of membership for the group. This discourages thinking for oneself [intellectual and moral independence] which is actually the tendency we WANT to encourage. Anarchy is not an evangelism or a political party. It is not a matter of numbers or membership. It is not about "keeping people in line" or "accountability" [fuck you, anarchocops!]. Organisations always tend to worry about "the membership" first and keeping people as members second. This is not a revolutionary, insurrectionary

anarchism. It does not grow from a fluidity of thought and practice that can only grow in soils watered by independent thought. Such an anarchism only comes, as Landstreicher's analysis also suggests, from a "network of like-minded people" which should be self-selecting and informally organised [i.e. everything is voluntary and based on voluntarism]. This network focuses not on members but activities and the methods and tools needed for them. It is a way for people to bring their desires to fruition in a situation where many things cannot be achieved alone. Consequently, such a group is highly likely to be temporary and task-oriented. But it means there is no doctrine to ascribe to, no membership statement to sign and no articles of association to be tattooed on your back to which you must be held by judges or cops. It is a way, with others, to become the creators of one's own existence, to organise oneself. Self-determination is the be all and end all of anarchist organising.

Keeping the idea of self-determining at the top of one's organising agenda is all important and is to constantly remind oneself that "the revolt against the present order of things originates in the individual desire to create one's life as one sees fit" - as Landstreicher puts this in a piece in the second volume about alienation. What Landstreicher means by "alienation" here is "a social process through which the institutions of social reproduction wrest our creative energy, our capacity to determine the conditions of our existence from us, placing their alienated form (not just as labor power, but as social roles of all sorts as well) at the service of the ruling order." Essentially, then, this is describing the way this society works to undermine any individual's ability and struggle to realise themselves on their own terms. This issue is taken further by some [such as so-called "primitivists", for example] and made a matter of "civilization" itself. [In the past I have engaged in discussions about civilization which

ranged from an almost primitivist desire to see it eradicated to a more considered desire for us to get past certain forms of it, i.e. "post-civilization". These past discussions were almost entirely articulated in terms of those I was interacting with from John Zerzan to Davids Graeber and Wengrow. The vital issue, it now seems to me, is actually to come to a considered and thoughtful position about what "civilization" actually even is - for as we describe it so we will describe our reasons for or against it.] On civilization Landstreicher has this to say:

"civilization is not essentially a mindset, a particular ideological system or a fall from Eden. It is something far more concrete: an ensemble of intertwined institutions-the state, the economy, technological systems, religion, the family, the city, etc.-that work together to precisely predetermine the conditions under which we exist, thus alienating our capacity to determine our own lives, producing and reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation. Thus, the revolutionary destruction of civilization would simply be the revolutionary destruction of the institutions through which domination and exploitation are maintained. It would not be a return to a supposed Eden or some alleged original Oneness of being. In fact, it would offer no guarantees. It would simply put the capacity to determine our lives back into our own hands - from there it would be up to us to decide what we would do with it."

I like Landstreicher's institutional focus here and his further assertion that, as an aspect of yet more of our direct action which acts without permission, we refuse "every attempt to institutionalize the struggle". In fact, Landstreicher then goes on to write a piece exactly about "Countering Institutions" and begins this by insisting:

"The method one proposes for carrying out the struggle against the present order reflects the sort of existence one desires. The anarchist project has its origin in the desire of individuals to create their lives for themselves, on the basis of their own passions, inclinations and capacities. This aspiration becomes insurrectional when it confronts the institutions that presently define social relationships and determine the conditions of existence and the individual recognizes the necessity of destroying these institutions in order to realize this desire. The dream of unfettered, self-determined life is the positive impulse that moves us to rebel. But it is not a blueprint for a new social order. It does not provide the answers in advance, but rather raises questions and draws us into the unknown. It presents us with the task of destroying our prison so that we can discover what lies beyond its walls."

This raises an interesting question, however: should the anarchist, revolutionary, insurrectionist, whatever, know the place they are going to, be able to describe it fully-formed and in minute detail, before they set out to go there? When one is in prison and does not now know what is going on beyond its walls should one require an idea of what should be beyond its walls before one contemplates, or even acts to achieve, their escape? OF COURSE NOT. Such a requirement is simply a further chain placed on the person who is already a captive, an extra bond to keep them imprisoned. Consequently, we must reject this idea out of hand. Yet, as Landstreicher analyses our social situation, we are also in somewhat of a similar situation in relation to social institutions which fetter and undermine us in ways already alluded to but which also exist as the daily means to our own continued ordered existence. The government that oppresses us is also the same government that, such as it is, "keeps the peace", allows trade to continue uninterrupted, keeps utilities running, etc. It is entirely for this reason that governments,

which are the locus of dominating power in our modern societies, can say that, without them, everything would be chaos in an act of political blackmail.

As I read Landstreicher on "institutions" he rejects them entirely regardless. This includes any institutions of the type Murray Bookchin once mooted since, for Landstreicher at least, "the institutionalization of decision-making is the basic description of socio-political authority." I have never liked Bookchin's "Communalist" proposals for exactly just such a reason myself and it always seemed as if he just wanted benevolent bosses to me or to let "the good guys" run the show. What both Landstreicher and I want, however, is no boss at all and no amount of past moaning and name calling by Bookchin [see a lot of his 1990s output] is going to change that. Anarchism, as I think Landstreicher agrees with me, is not "benevolent world government"; it is self-organisation, a very different thing - and, as it is self-organisation, it has no prescription and no one can represent me but I myself. It absolutely can NEVER be the case that any institution acts on my behalf or otherwise organises the communal conditions of life. All that amounts to just another government, another attempt to keep the world much as it is now but replacing people we think of as "baddies" with people we would like to hope were "goodies". This is nonsense and a betrayal of anarchy. Anarchy is self-organisation not authorities, something oppositional to any authority, and, consequently, not government [a body or institution invested with authority to govern]. Basically here we must have the courage of our convictions, eschew the institutions and make a go of it according to our principles. The right attitude, then, is the one that Landstreicher himself describes:

"the question is not that of what structures to create to replace those we destroy, but of how to go about destroying the present social order in such a way that we transform ourselves into indomitable individuals capable of creating and transforming fluid relationships reflective of our dreams and aspirations."

We have a very simply expressed guerrilla mentality here then: self-organisation is the aim and self-organisation is its means. We do not need, nor do we as people of principle seek, institutionally constraining channels to our own self-organisation. Our self-organisation is, in fact, a means to our self-organised attacks upon all institutions.

But since Landstreicher eschews any form of government or imagined more benevolent governmental replacements ["institutions"], he needs to provide an alternative and, as already mentioned previously, he does: "relations of affinity". This is something he sees as intimately connected with determining the conditions of OUR OWN existence and so "the capacity for self-organization". But this is something we have to throw ourselves into and participate in for, as already suggested, such relations are not superficial or notional and cannot just happen. Therefore:

"We need to intentionally create the opportunity for encounters, discussions and debates in which our ideas, aspirations and visions of the revolutionary struggle can come into contention, where real affinities and real conflicts can come out and be developed—not with the aim of finding a unifying middle ground in which every one is equally compromised, but to clarify distinctions and so discover a real basis for creating projects of action that aren't simply playing the role of radical, activist or militant, but that are real reflections of the desires, passions and ideas of those involved."

The personal connection here is key and needs to be repeated over and over again in our thinking to emphasise its importance. This is not a matter of "the cause" or "a movement". It is something volitional, something desiring, a matter of what we want and are moved by. It is about genuine emotional connections that speak from the heart of our being. This is why Landstreicher goes on to say that "formality undermines the possibility of affinity" for if affinity is a matter of these things, and so genuine connections, then "formality", as something detached and processual, cannot achieve it. Landstreicher re-emphasises this again when he says that "Relationships of affinity are the necessary basis of self-organization on the most basic daily level of struggle and of life. It is the deep and growing knowledge of one another that provides the basis for developing projects of revolt that truly reflect our own aspirations and dreams, for developing a shared struggle that is based in the recognition and, at its best, the passionate enjoyment of our very real and beautiful differences." Landstreicher can also give a further reason for relationships of affinity though when he adds: "In the relationship of affinity, a new way of relating free from all roles and every hackneyed social relationship already begins to develop, and with it an apparent unpredictability that the authorities will never understand." If institutions and formal organisations have their processes, their hierarchies and their systematic natures, what they are opposed with is the honesty and reality of true affinity, something which does not rely on a system or overarching organisation at all but the lived bond between people who share their proclivities and their lives in voluntary union. It is, in a way, just like the navies of sovereign countries and the pirate bands that formed from those who had run away from them: voluntarism is stronger than coercion, affinity defeats oppressive hierarchy or forced relations.

So, to repeat, the anarchist point here is to act without permission, to act for ourselves according to our own desires and to join in union with others based on relations of genuine and tested affinity in order to attack the institutionalised status quo. Therefore, as Landstreicher says moving into his series titled "Against the Logic of Submission", "we anarchists consider ourselves to be in revolt at every moment of our lives and attack this social order without worrying whether 'the time is ripe'." But he wishes to describe a necessary attitude here which I shall quote in full:

"But equally important is the anarchist recognition of the primacy of the actual, living individual (as opposed to the collectivized cog and to the abstract concept of the individual) is the recognition that we need to become a certain sort of being, a being capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams in the face of the most fierce and powerful enemy: this entire civilization—the state, capital, the technological system..."

To live as a rebel, as a self-willed anarchist revolutionary, requires a great deal of will, determination and spirit in the face of dizzying odds. Thus, one essential aspect of developing an insurrectional practice is the transformation of oneself into such a spirited, willful being. Such a transformation does not take place through therapy but through attacking the social order both in its manifestations in the world and in oneself and one's relationships. An uncompromising cruelty may prove essential to this task, because there are so many chains to be broken, so many limits to be destroyed. As one comrade has said, the individual quest is 'the appropriation of everything that has been subtracted from him through family, school, institutions, roles, in order to find his specificity, totality, universality, lost... in the process of domestication and the construction of symbolic culture.' So the point is to make the decision to take one's life back in its totality, a decision

that requires just the sort of ferocity that will be necessary to demolish this society. And such a decision will transform all one's relationships, demanding a clarity that will leave no room for submission to the demands of social protocol, disrespectful tolerance or pity for those who fear the energy of unchanneled desire more than its suppression. In making this decision (and the decision is only truly made as one acts to realize it), one is completely rejecting the logic of submission that dominates most relationships."

This reads to me as taking on an existential character. Read, for example, what Landstreicher says in a further essay about this topic, something he imagines as a project of living "a projectual life":

"At present, so many of us are so careful, so apologetic, ready to distance ourselves from even our most radical and defiant acts. This indicates that we have not yet understood what it means to live our lives projectually. Our actions are still tentative, not full of ourselves, but stepped into lightly with a readiness to withdraw at the least sign risk or danger. Contrarily, the development of an anarchist projectuality requires that one immerse oneself into what one does without holding back, without hedging one's bets. Not that this immersion is ever a finished project. It is a thing in motion, a tension that must be perpetually lived, perpetually grappled with. But it has been proven over and over and over again that hedging one's bets as surely brings defeat as surrender. Having taken this responsibility for our lives, there is no room for half measures. The point is to live without measure. Longer chains are chains nonetheless."

Thus, it is about more than seeing ourselves as othered versions of capitalist citizens or liberal individuals in a "democratic" world. It is about more than seeing ourselves as

members of a state that the world has arbitrarily sorted us into as it assigns us our place. This, let us not forget, is the order we should all reject and refuse. It is this order that makes us outlaws and illegal because of who we are and what we want. We are its enemies. But, as Landstreicher himself expresses this thought here, this has consequences in terms of the state and its order:

"In society's eyes, any refusal of its order is a crime, but this immersion into life moves insurgence beyond the level of crime. At this point, the insurgent has ceased to merely react to the codes, rules and laws of society and has come to determine her actions on his own terms without regard for the social order."

So the becoming outlaws is true FROM BOTH SIDES. The state makes us outlaws in recognition of our decision to refuse its ways but we nonetheless determine to act in disregard of it even further, and on our own recognisance, at all times anyway. This Landstreicher calls our "projectuality" by which he really means to indicate the mode or character of our life as we live it every day, i.e. as a project in itself. This is the directing of our agency consciously in a certain direction, something that can be met, or rejected, by others as we search for our relations of affinity and it is, as Landstreicher calls it, a "liberated desire". Through this we see affinity as a meeting and union of liberated wills for whatever purposes we have in doing so, a matter of passions as much as reasons. No wonder, then, that Landstreicher here has a piece on "free love" where he says that "The point is to transform ourselves into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate rebels - and, thus, also into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate lovers - and this requires acting without guilt, regret or pity. This self-transformation is an essential aspect of the revolutionary transformation of the world, and we cannot let it get side-tracked..." This

is then about *transforming our reality* and making ourselves the arbiters of our own experience. Landstreicher says that "Free love, like revolution, acts to recreate reality in its own image, the image of a great and dangerous utopia" and to that I say YES!

This, then, is a genuine act of revolt, a life project of revolting against the state in free love and revolution and actually amounts, in the title of the last piece of the "Against the Logic of Submission" collection of texts, to "The Subversion of Existence". Landstreicher in fact himself says that "The desire to change the world remains merely an abstract ideal or a political program unless it becomes the will to transform one's own existence" and with this I entirely agree. This is to make your life a "defiance of the present reality" and is "creating one's life as a tension towards freedom" such that it can provide "a context for the actions we take" and act as "a basis for analysis". Landstreicher here notes that "this project is the transformation of existence in a way that destroys all domination and exploitation, it is inherently anti-political" and this means that it is not about degrees of this or that [i.e. power or domination] but is about "our desires for a qualitatively different existence". It is expressly about a transformation of our existence which includes external circumstances as well as internal values and realities. The relationships with others we seek are then not just tactics or strategies but things aimed to be exactly actions pursued in such a direction, a matter of the path we are walking. As Landstreicher himself puts this:

"If our aim is the transformation of existence, then the development of relations of affinity is not just a tactical maneuver. It is the attempt to develop relationships of freedom within the context of struggle. Relationships of freedom develop through a deep and ever increasing knowledge of the other—a knowledge of their ideas, their aspirations, their

desires, their capacities, their inclinations. It is a knowledge of similarities, yes, but more significantly, it is a knowledge of differences, because it is at the point of difference that real practical knowledge begins, the knowledge of whether and how one can carry out projects and create life with another. It is for this reason that among ourselves—as in our relationship to that which we are struggling against—it is necessary to avoid the practice of compromise and the constant search for common ground."

This, I hope you can see, is about *creating new life* as in *new forms of life* which correspond to transformed values and flow from transformed lives. It calls for almost unimaginable honesty in human relations in order to achieve this from those who will always be fighting to change from the people the world created them at first to become. It is an act of self-willed transformation that will never end so long as we live in which the temptation to false relations will always be a real and present danger.

But where does that "temptation" come from? In a collection of pieces titled "The Network of Domination" from 2001-2002 Wolfi Landstreicher wants to address this. Here we find pieces about the state, economic arrangements [i.e. capitalism], class, work, technology [and its increasing role in social control], property, religion, the family, prison [and society's increasing nature as an open prison] and, finally, civilization itself. These, put together, are the main elements in what Landstreicher conceives of as a network of interests which come to dominate and shape society - and so all relationships within it. What links these things together, besides their foul connection in this conspiracy to societal coercion, is that they all stand opposed to ideas of acting on our own recognisance, to our self-organisation and self-determination. If we had this, these things would not stand. In practice, then, they act as barriers to its realisation and this

collection of articles very much reminds me of Emma Goldman's similar calling out of opponents in her own essay "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" where there, in her own context, she lists religion, property and government [the state] as the pre-eminent enemies of individual sovereignty and social harmony.

Landstreicher here, however, begins with the state. Of this he says:

"The state could not exist if our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence as individuals in free association with each other had not been taken from us. This dispossession is the fundamental social alienation which provides the basis for all domination and exploitation. This alienation can rightly be traced to the rise of property (I say property as such and not just private property, because from very early on a great deal of property was institutional—owned by the state). Property can be defined as the exclusive claim by certain individuals and institutions over tools, spaces and materials necessary for existence, making them inaccessible to others. This claim is enforced through explicit or implicit violence. No longer free to grasp whatever is necessary for creating their lives, the dispossessed are forced to conform to conditions determined by the self-proclaimed owners of property in order to maintain their existence, which thus becomes an existence in servitude. The state is the institutionalization of this process which transforms the alienation of the capacity of individuals to determine the conditions of their own existence into the accumulation of power into the hands of a few."

The state, then, Landstreicher sees as the "institutionalisation" of social life itself in effect, the means to standardising and enforcing how people shall live [there is no point in a standard that is not enforced]. The state makes use of laws [which can only ever tell

people what not to do - and then only because it will be punished if you are subsequently apprehended for doing it], claims a monopoly on legitimate violence, creates a relationship of subjects to the state [which Landstreicher terms "vassalage"] and engages in "social war" in order to create and maintain this situation whilst, additionally, through political mechanisms which today are propagandised as "democracy", obliging us to engage in political processes it determines in order to affect its outcomes. In fact, of course, this expressly political participation only really acts to get us to voluntarily give away our freedom of action, our acting without permission with which Landstreicher began his articles under the banner of "willful disobedience". Today, of course, many states also exist as pro-capitalist entities if, that is, they are not in fact capitalist entities themselves. Certainly they, and their officers in governments, have relationships with those in business and who run explicitly capitalist operations which synchronise and result in politico-economic interests being served. Just as one company seeks to best its economic opponent and so take the spoil of such war so countries engage in the same fights as supporters and policemen and soldiers of their associated capitalist interests. States then, as necessarily violent actors who seek to deny the right to violence to all others, put the muscle and the threat into contemporary capitalistic arrangements of human relations and ally themselves with capital.

If states are going to survive, however, then the mass of people at large must be given something to do other than thinking of ways, or having the time to think of ways, to destroy them. One thing states achieved in arriving at their present state was the robbing of millions of people of the capacity "to determine the conditions of their own existence". This was an action not just necessary to the survival of the state but also to the increasing rise of capitalism as an increasingly unimpeachable practice of human

relations. What both together achieve, as Landstreicher notes, is to make it virtually impossible for most people to create the lives and relationships they might desire if they had a choice. These two entities work together to restrict that choice and, if possible, to force only one choice - that of the societal drone coerced to capitalism and states. For such people the economic reality of life is that "Our lives have been divided into units of measured time that we are compelled to sell in order to buy back our survival in the form of bits of the stolen lives of others that production has transformed into commodities for sale. This is economic reality." The three "most fundamental institutions" of this reality Landstreicher delineates as "property, commodity exchange and work". The result of all this is that, essentially, most people are turned into wage slaves, people who must work under capitalist conditions in order to live under a rule of capitalist economy. As Admiral Ackbar might've said, "Its a trap!"

This trap has several aspects, however. The first is class which, at a basic level on an economic scale, can be split into the dispossessed and those who possess the wealth [the haves and the have nots]. Obviously the dispossessed number a lot more and so, equally obviously, they need to be kept under control and occupied lest they realise their vast numerical advantage and the power to act for themselves that it hides. [Here mass media, owned and controlled by billionaires, does its duty keeping people occupied and fighting amongst themselves, never with their eyes on the actual target and always ripe for a new distraction – one very good reason why you should never use it.] What one could get here is some kind of class narrative such as socialism or Marxism provide but, aside from the obvious truth that most people are dispossessed and deliberately hampered in this society from acting for themselves, it has never really appealed to me since I do not identify myself as the member of a class, dispossessed or otherwise. My

aim is not to take control of the means of production, or some such, but to decide my own life generally. Landstreicher takes much the same approach when he writes:

"Because there is no common positive project to be found in our condition as proletarians—as the exploited and dispossessed—our project must be the struggle to destroy our proletarian condition, to put an end to our dispossession. The essence of what we have lost is not control over the means of production or of material wealth; it is our lives themselves, our capacity to create our existence in terms of our own needs and desires. Thus, our struggle finds its terrain everywhere, at all times. Our aim is to destroy everything that keeps our lives from us: capital, the state, the industrial and post-industrial technological apparatus, work, sacrifice, ideology, every organization that tries to usurp our struggle, in short, all systems of control."

In other words, our struggle is not simply to "take charge" where "take charge" refers to anything past our own lives. Landstreicher's vision, again as mine, is a free network of human interactions where all these human beings are responsible for their own lives and decisions in a context of free association. Here he talks about developing "new ways of relating based on self-organisation" - which is exactly the point. If this were put into practice then "taking charge" at the macro-level of the state would cease to exist all by itself and corporations would collapse overnight as human beings insisted on their egoistic will to self-determination. Instead of living under centralising control, things would automatically decentralise as the effect of this activity.

It is to belay this possibility, however, that the "deadly alienation of our existence" under oppressive capitalist authoritarianism takes place. It is a system of relations determined

to undermine our ability to live and act for ourselves. It literally wants to determine your day and remove choice from you - starting with when you get up. It wants most of your day to be filled with work and so to take place at the behest of a boss and this organisation of human life literally gives you no time but to do what's required to keep this job which has been manufactured as your daily means of survival. Do what your boss says and keep him pleased otherwise you might lose your job. [So keep a bottle handy to piss in so that you are not pulled up for taking a toilet break.] In a machine world human beings essentially become machine parts and large numbers of people today are essentially parts on a production line just making sure various processes continue to take place. If they could be replaced by actual machines they would be [as those from car plant workers to checkout people in supermarkets have been] and its only because other machines haven't been invented yet that they aren't. Doesn't that make you feel valuable? Its not really so different from the colonial plantations where slaves were forced to work or die. Today, in most places, we cannot make people work or die directly anymore so a system had to be invented which essentially does the same thing but more indirectly. Capitalism today robs you of your life and forces you to work at a job for a boss to survive. Your boss is, in this case, not going to kill you if you don't work but he will carry on, unconcerned, if you don't work and die as a consequence of your poverty or by being severely hampered in your ability to participate in a capitalist society.

On numerous occasions Wolfi Landstreicher, in such discussions, points out how "an integrated system of techniques, machinery, people and materials" that has been created through political and economic means [by creating certain standard relationships] has been "designed to reproduce the social relationships that prolong and advance its existence." This extends to technology which Landstreicher sees as

"reproducing" relationships "in accordance with the needs of the ruling system". Here we see the importance of not just how we act or what we want but how we relate with anybody - for it is in this relating that our society is created. It is then also in this relating that our form of life is created and what is and is not possible is found. Under authoritarian capitalism [my conjunction and shorthand for the dominant political and economic thinking of our day] relationships are formed in order to perpetuate social control. It follows, as consequence, that what is created by that system is a function of that system and in order to further or reproduce it even more so. Thus:

"the industrial system was not simply (or even primarily) developed because it was a more efficient way for manufacturing goods. Capitalists are not particularly interested in the manufacturing of goods as such. Rather they manufacture goods simply as a necessary part of the process of expanding capital, creating profit and maintaining their control over wealth and power. Thus, the factory system—this integration of techniques, machines, tools, people and resources that is technology as we know it—was developed as a means for controlling the most volatile part of the production process— the human worker."

The key point to note here is that technology is not "neutral" - as so many of its advocates try to trick us into believing. It is, in fact and in modern understanding of the term in terms of what it actually produces, "part of the structures of domination". In many cases it is an aid to the domination - and not here simply in terms of human surveillance but of the domination of the planet, and its resources, by human beings.

This is a book about thinking, however, and none of this would be possible but for the thoughts that we allow ourselves to be inhabited by. One absolutely key thought here is

"property". Property is itself, even at its most basic level, an assumption. Why, for example, would someone imagine that they can own land? What about their relation to a given piece of land [land, of course, does not itself come in "pieces" but is simply continuous] makes them think it is "theirs"? Historically, however, and not least as a key precursor to the creation of capitalist states, people absolutely did imagine that land could be owned and that this ownership gave rights to some and took them away from others. [We have already seen earlier in this book how that move is vital if you want to make lots of people dependent on work for others in order to survive, a move which creates a mass of people ripe for exploitation and coercion.] The fact is that, in order to create this prison of states and capital people have absolutely had to imagine that they could own things exclusively and enforce those ownership rights onto others. Capitalism wouldn't work at all unless they did. It is because "this is mine and not yours" that you are forced to struggle for "yours". If this was neither mine nor yours then anyone could use it and people might even quite willingly share it [since no one would imagine they owned it].

Property, then, is not really about ownership or possession. Its about relationship. As Landstreicher explains this:

"we must look at property as a social relationship between things and people mediated by the state and the market. The institution of property could not exist without the state that concentrates power into institutions of domination. Without the laws, the arms, the cops and the courts, property would have no real basis, no force to support it. In fact, it could be said that the state is itself the instituting of property. What is the state if not a network of institutions through which control over a particular territory and its resources is asserted

and maintained by force of arms? All property is ultimately state property since it exists only by permission and under the protection of the state."

I like this last point and the analysis it examples. Because we have invented property and states to be the things we think them to be today, in effect all property is state property since the state can at any time make the claim that this particular piece of property is *its* property - and can act to seize it. Once you accept that then you are basically saying that all property is guaranteed by the state and is only really on loan to anyone else in lieu of the state deciding it is its own. But what you are then saying is that property is where the state's presence as an actor which aims to disable your own ability to act for yourself begins and ends. "Property" is actually the border of the state - as Landstreicher has it. You can't just walk into a store, take what food and other goods you need to survive and remain healthy, without paying for it and even if its an emergency that you need it. Everything in that store is "property" and so under the state's protection. The state insists on rules of relationship between people thought of as actual or potential property owners and requires a certain relationship between them which constrains our ability to act for ourselves. You can't, as Gerrard Winstanley soon found out in mid-seventeenth century England, just turn up on a piece of land and start building a house and planting crops. If you could, capitalism would be dead in the water as people provided for themselves from their own efforts. The trifecta of state, capitalism and property is how that ability is, in fact, fatally undermined as it institutes that the state's permission is required in order to act in a context in which ways of relating to and with each other is strictly controlled. Thus, "the world of property, ruled by the market and the state, is an impoverished world where lack, not satisfaction, permeates existence." This "lack" is deliberately created in order to control.

Consequently, and ultimately:

"we must attack the institution of property, every physical, legal, moral or social fence. This attack begins from the desire we each have to take back our life and determine it on our own terms. Every moment and every space we steal back from this society of production and consumption provides us with a weapon for expanding this struggle. But, as one comrade wrote: '...this struggle is widespread or it is nothing. Only when looting becomes a large-scale practice, when the gift arms itself against exchange value, when relationships are no longer mediated by commodities and individuals give their own value to things, only then does the destruction of the market and of money – that's all one with the demolition of the state and every hierarchy – become a real possibility', and with it the destruction of property. The individual revolt against the world of property must expand into a social revolution that will break down every fence and open every possibility for individual realization."

This is why things like open commensality, mutual aid and giving things as gifts are revolutionary ways of thinking which attack and, where practised, destroy our present coercive relationships - for they introduce new ways to act with each other. Practised habitually, they would reconfigure property and destroy capitalism because these things require things to be exclusive and controlled rather than open and free. Refusing to count the cost destroys the mentality of "everything has a price" because if you don't count the cost then nothing has a price. If you share then deliberate collusion to maintain scarcity or exclusivity is swept aside. We can behave differently towards each other and maintain different relations between ourselves. We have simply been taught otherwise and forced, on ultimate pain of violence, to maintain certain relations

between ourselves and ignore others. Capitalist society is a political, economic, moral and intellectual prison - and there are lots of both voluntary and coerced prison guards making sure we behave as required.

Historically, some of these guards have been religious - which is a subject Wolfi Landstreicher also addresses. The two points I take from his analysis of this in his piece are that, first, the history of religion is really a history of property and the state as religious institutions, perhaps whilst focusing on kingdoms of heaven, went about building, or colluding with, kingdoms on earth and, second, their focus on "the sacred" is actually a focus on things they have themselves consecrated. In both of these activities we see how religion, like states, act to constrain the free will of people at large, denuding them of their ability to self-organise, both materially and morally/intellectually. Under the guise of the spiritually consequential, they behave in ways very temporally consequential. One of the major ways they have done this, historically speaking, is through promotion of "the family", another subject Landstreicher addresses. The family is perhaps the most insidious institution in any of our lives because it is both so intimate and immediate, the reason any of us are actually alive to begin with. But that does not make it any less controlling or potentially dangerous to the goal of "self-organisation". Everyone will know, for example, how there is a tendency in parents to regard their children as their possessions and things to be dominated and bent to their will. Aside from the obvious effects of this, we might ask what it teaches the child subject to it. The family is, then, easily characterised as both dominating and hierarchical [the latter being a word taken from religion in that it originally referred to an order of priests] but can also fulfil the role Landstreicher often refers to of the institution which exists to reproduce the relations apparent in society.

Obviously, in capitalist-authoritarian times this is not a good thing but no relation is beneficial to the principle of self-organisation if it imagines that one family member is the head of others or a male is the head of a female, etc. Thus, even in our most intimate relations of love and family inauthentic and dangerous ideas can flourish if we allow them to.

All such relations, in modern context, are in fact consequent on the PRISON SOCIETY we have built as Benthamite ideas of panopticons became enculturated lived realities. There are, for example, plenty of buildings, including private homes, in my neighbourhood, as I'm sure there are in yours, which have "security cameras". Some of these are "Ring" cameras that are associated with the company Amazon who, in some jurisdictions, have shared their footage with police departments. Such devices, along with publicly funded and sited cameras, essentially become part of a 24 hour surveillance culture of devices which are constantly reporting on public activities. [Of course, when Landstreicher was originally writing we were not yet quite at the broadband age and so streaming surveillance footage of public activities was at that time not possible. But he does include a footnote warning about the potential for police departments, and others, to track us through cellular phones. Now, of course, our phones, should we have them - and I don't - can track us and tell anyone with the authority to want to know who we are by cross-checking every search, browser use and message sent that we have ever made. Our phones can contain all our personal details and betray everywhere we've been and everything we've done in a huge capitalist-inspired move towards betraying ourselves. It is sometimes said, in fact, that various secret services have a "record everything" mentality in regard to the proliferation of electronic devices now in service which can track and record us.]

All this amounts to a prison society, the product of mentalities of social control which see personal agency as the problem to be combatted and replicating prison conditions in public society as the solution to this problem. Never before has society had so many examples of cameras, recording devices, trackers, surveillance equipment, armed guards, police and computer analysis of public movements at its disposal in order to manage social and even private activity. As Wolfi Landstreicher saw it even in 2002 when writing about this, this "methodology of imprisonment", which is one with a methodology of police and policing, is gradually, and consistently, "being imposed over the whole social landscape". As Landstreicher then goes on to note himself, in addition, the target of all this activity is US, every one of us, the ordinary Joe or Josephine. We are ALL watched and not just some, the so-called "dangerous" ones who might do things "we" don't want them to do. We are ALL watched, all monitored, all under suspicion. Allied to a class analysis of this, we might say that the haves are monitoring the have nots or the privileged are using their power to monitor the underprivileged. If you wish to dispute this analysis ask yourself what rights YOU have to monitor anyone or put them under surveillance, let alone what ability you have. If you wish to monitor a billionaire like Elon Musk, for example, as people have tried to do in relation to his private planes, he very quickly becomes agitated about it and threatens all kinds of retribution, claiming it puts him in danger [even though this information is publicly available anyway as a matter of air traffic information]. But he doesn't like it. Well why should we either? Is privacy only for the billionaires?

The issue here, as Landstreicher contends, is that:

"From the perspective of the rulers of this world, we are, indeed, all criminals (at least potentially), all monsters threatening their tranquil sleep, because we are all potentially capable of seeing through the veil of the law and choosing to ignore it and take back the moments of our lives whenever we can on our own terms."

Self-organisation [which in this case can also be described as either autonomy or agency] is an ever-present threat to those who want to organise others and make self-organisation impossible. So all those who may spontaneously decide to self-organise are then to be regarded as a threat to the self-designated organisers - just like, earlier on in this short book, the sailors were a potential threat to the navies they wanted to desert from in the seventeenth century but were prevented from doing so by the threat of violence and death. What one can say about this is that such a system cannot be reformed. One cannot keep this system but make it a bit nicer. The prison is the prison regardless of any small comforts or niceties and the person who simply requires their freedom from prison walls will accept nothing less than freedom from its constraints and the opportunity to take their life into their own hands and live on their own terms. Consequently, the prison society, as a very idea and at its foundations, must be attacked and its destruction, escape from its clutches, is our only possible destination.

As an "afterword" to all this commentary on "the network of domination" Landstreicher offers a few short thoughts on "civilization" - on the basis that all he has so far discussed in this mini-collection of texts actually really amounts to civilization itself. But, as Landstreicher rightly diagnoses, the problem here is exactly what we think "civilization" actually is to begin with, a thorny problem many attempt to wrestle with. Here Landstreicher comes to the conclusion that civilization is "a network of institutions,

structures and systems that impose social relationships of domination and exploitation" or, in other words, is a society "comprised of the state, property, religion (or in modern societies, ideology), law, the patriarchal family, commodity exchange, class rule—everything we, as anarchists, oppose." Putting it yet another way, Landstreicher adds that "what all civilized societies have in common is the systematic expropriation of the lives of those who live within them" and what it amounts to, for him, is the "domestication" of the mass of people in such societies. Therefore, "Civilization is thus the systematic and institutionalized domestication of the vast majority of people in a society by the few who are served by the network of domination." This is all very neat and tidy in terms of Landstreicher's own rhetoric and it balances up nicely with a desire to promote "becoming uncontrollable individuals capable of making and carrying out the decisions that affect our lives in free association with others." But is it a useful definition of "civilization"?

If you have read David Graeber and David Wengrow's various writings over several years, and especially their book written together, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, the answer is certainly not. All Landstreicher has done is list civilization's failures and take them for the whole. Against such things, and such civilizations, all freedom-loving anarchists would pour scorn and pledge their revolt against them. But Graeber and Wengrow, in their book, say that civilization doesn't have to be like that and they posit times and places in the human past when it wasn't, adding in what is needed to make civilization a positive experience to the pot as they go. Surely Landstreicher's own arguments suggest that people interacting with each other that come to amount to societies and civilizations need not always exhibit the networks of domination Landstreicher has here detailed? What else are we imagining in terms of positive

possibilities if not that civilizations could potentially be other than that which our current experience of them is?

The issue here is that Landstreicher cannot imagine any civilization that, in his words, accommodates "the reappropriation of life by individuals who have been exploited, dispossessed and dominated". He largely equates "civilization" with "institution" and sees this as a necessarily constraining, controlling entity that fetters the possibility for self-organisation. Graeber and Wengrow, on the other hand, as folks much more open to ideas such as those put forward for imagined emancipatory civilizations by people like Murray Bookchin [one of the chapter titles in their book is even "the ecology of freedom", itself a title of one of Bookchin's most famous books], do not take the worst examples and possibilities of civilization for the phenomenon as a whole. They can imagine [and, if talking about past examples they have discovered, call up from an imagined past] much more emancipatory civilizations than Landstreicher finds himself capable of. In this, I find myself torn, having in the past spoken to both agendas.

In the end, however, I must come down in favour of Landstreicher and I do so on the basis of asking the question "Is a civilization, thought of as what Landstreicher calls a 'universal social model' even desirable?" My answer to that question is "No" as Landstreicher's "innumerable [social] experiments varying drastically from place to place and changing over time" seems far more reflective of the ethos of relations marked by autonomy, agency, free association, affinity and decentralisation [i.e. self-organisation] that I have spoken to before. Whether a uniform model of social relations could ever now be benevolent or not, and there will continue to be anarchists like Bookchin and Graeber, both now deceased, who continue to imagine so, it seems to me that the

priority is keeping the idea of self-organisation before us, regardless of form, even if that only ever results in numerous endless experiments in bringing it to fruition in human relations in the face of oppressive attempts to control the whole social sphere. In other words, self-organisation is the principle we seek to enculturate whether it ends up in a civilization or not. A universal *organisation* is NOT an anarchist goal.

I need to cut my tour through Wolfi Landstreicher's *Willful Disobedience* short now, however, and round this all up lest I outstay my welcome and go on for far too long. I have, in this short book, provided some opening, and connecting, thoughts on guerrillas [and guerrilla mind], on pirates and their piracy, and on anarchy and acting like an anarchist. I see connections and similarities between them and some I have brought out. But I have not brought them all out, or extrapolated too far in regard to them, and so I leave these descriptions open so that readers may think for themselves about similarities and differences in regard to them and their contexts. The key point I am trying to get across here in this book is their common focus, to my mind, on intellectual, moral, social, economic and political independence, and on these sorts of independence as the basis for living life oppositionally to the dominant powers of this world. This is, as I then suggest, about thinking oppositionally to the way the authoritarian society which you live in wants to organise you. This book, playing its part in that task, is then about anarchy in every respect and so it is about *self-organisation* in every respect. That's why this book in fact discusses guerrillas, pirates and what an anarchist is and does. If you have that thought clear, and perhaps some ideas about where we might take that that are beginning to form already like seeds in your mind, then perhaps we can actually begin with this activity for real and live it out authentically in lives of free spirit?